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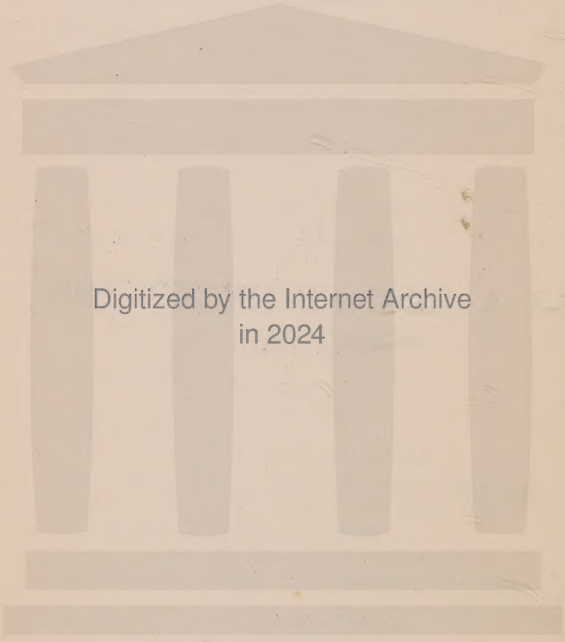

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AS A KING READY TO THE BATTLE

BY

W. J. TOWNSEND, D.D.

"Wherefore take up the whole Armour of God."—EPH. vi. 13.

"Let us put on the Armour of Light."—ROM. xiii. 12.

"They prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle."—JOB xv. 24.

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I

THE GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST

"No soldier on service entangleth himself with the affairs of this life: that he may please Him who enrolled him as a soldier."—2 TIM. ii. 4.

"Christian rise and act thy creed,
Let thy prayer be in thy deed;
Seek the right, perform the true,
Raise thy life and work anew.

Principalities and powers,
Still beset thy weaker hours;
Give them battle, seal their doom,
Angel guests shall fill their room."

R. RUSSELL.

IT was a perfect literary instinct that guided the Apostle Paul to use the calling and methods of military life to illustrate the experience and duties of the Christian believer. Moved by the Holy Spirit to set forth the highest things as the truth is in

Jesus, his intellectual training and aptitudes made Paul an instrument of rare fitness for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose. The figure employed perfectly elucidates all sides of the Christian life, and the apostle uses it with the hand of a master.

The comparison instituted is not only a true, but an exceedingly attractive one. A soldier's life appeals to many passions and emotions of the human heart. It powerfully strikes the imagination, and stirs the feeling of patriotism; it gratifies the love of adventure, fires the desire for conquest, and draws into activity man's natural tendency towards athletic discipline. Hence, in spite of its unspeakable horrors and dangers, the soldier's calling has proved to be the most attractive in the history of the world. The literature of Oriental lands abounds in the use of analogies, allegories, parables and symbols. These were called into frequent service by Paul, and he was an adept in their application. Therefore he turns to the art of war, and with equal ease and skill enforces by it the active duties of the Christian life.

But although the military life illustrates in a remarkable manner the calling and duty of the Christian, yet it falls utterly short of representing either the motive, ideal, training,

discipline, weapons, inspiring purpose, or crowning conquest of the Christian life. These stand in contrast to, not in comparison with, the cruel and vulgar ideas and purposes of militarism. This is of the earth earthy, but the other purely spiritual; one aims to destroy life, the other to save the soul and to impart life eternal; one is a struggle of selfish ambition in which every evil quality of human nature is developed, the other is a supreme effort to destroy sin and secure the uplift of humanity; one aims at wealth, dominion, spoliation, rapine, "for all the armour of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall be for burning, for fuel of fire" (Isa. ix. 5); the one lets loose hell among the nations, but in the other every virtue and grace which can adorn humanity find full and perfect exemplification. The motto of Christianity is "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, among men in whom He is well pleased." To "let slip the dogs of war" is to turn men into demons; but the war of the Christian is to establish a kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy, which shall be universal in the earth.

Christ came to be the king of men. He is essentially and intrinsically a king. As such He claims dominion over the sons of men. He

redeems them from the tyranny and bondage of sin, and calls them to freedom in the truth, and to citizenship in the New Jerusalem which is the mother of us all. The great object of the manifestation of the Son of God was to destroy the works of the devil. These works are threefold—ignorance, sin, and death. In His gloriously complex character and work as prophet, priest and king the Christ accomplishes His great end. As prophet, He dispels the darkness of ignorance from the mind of man, and pours into it a flood of light on all subjects touching man's condition and destiny, his present and future, the laws of righteousness and truth, the nature of God and His relations to His creatures. As a priest, He offers Himself a sacrifice of infinite merit and preciousness for the sin of the world, bearing our sins in His body on the tree, and then ascending into heaven, taking the highest place of honour, and "ever living to make intercession for us." Thus can sin be forgiven and the believer cleansed from all unrighteousness. As a king, Christ having passed through the pains of death, by His own right hand and glorious arm broke the barriers of the grave and came forth from the chambers of death and Hades, thus destroying the power of death and opening the kingdom

of heaven to all believers. He now reigns in the highest heavens that He may subdue all things to Himself, and that the rebel spirit may be entirely expelled from the hearts of men.

The contest being carried on by Christ against the forces of evil in the universe is the contest also of all His people. He is the Head, and they are the Body. The Head and the Body are livingly and intimately united in spirit, in purpose, and in endeavour. The spirit of Christ enthuses the believer, and animates his powers. Then he proclaims the truth of God and scatters the healing knowledge of the gospel; he struggles against his own inbred sin and every form of evil; and he looks for the resurrection of the dead, when the last enemy, death, shall be destroyed.

The weapons that are used by the Christian "are not of the flesh but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Those required for both offence and attack are enumerated by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, and which will be described in the ensuing pages. All presuppose a full knowledge of the things of Christ, shown to them by the Holy Spirit according to the promise made by Jesus to the disciples at the supper table. It takes much to make a Christian,

although the process, as in all God's greatest works, is a simple one. "This is the work of God," said Jesus, "that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." The "things of Christ" which are shown to the Christian are those on which the very foundations of the mediatorial kingdom rest, and by which the moral ruin wrought by sin can alone be retrieved and God shall become "All in All" in His own universe.

The enemies which the Christian is called upon to oppose and destroy are manifold and of great subtlety. They will come up for detailed mention in subsequent pages, but it may be helpful to point out here, that the root enemy is sin which worketh in man the spirit of disobedience, and is the fruitful parent of all transgression and rebellion in the human heart. Sin is not a concrete entity or a personality, but rather a state or condition of mind, which is enmity against God, refuses to obey His commands or to be subject to His will. Many are concerned to find out who made sin, as though it were a creature with intellectual capacities, and they conclude that as God made all things, it must have been created by Him. Such an idea is not only utterly false, but most dishonouring to the Lord who loveth righteousness. It

must be borne in mind that in the creation of high and noble creatures, who could offer to the God of Love intelligent and lofty worship, it was necessary that they should be endowed with reason, conscience, understanding, and with many other intellectual and spiritual gifts, but that, above all, they should have the attribute of will, a power which brings them into the closest relation to the Godhead, and in which the image of God, borne by man, chiefly consists. God could only be worshipped acceptably, or served efficiently, by creatures who chose to worship or serve Him, and who, out of a perfect love, willed to give to Him the highest tribute of which they were capable. A nature that could choose to obey must necessarily be capable of disobeying, and it is awful to reflect that man chose evil, and became involved in sin with all its terrible consequences.

Sin, therefore, consists in an evil will, which turns from God, disowns His authority, unfurls the flag of rebellion, and spreads moral disorder and ruin wherever its influence can reach. Every creature under its power becomes a centre of mischief, and while suffering untold ills thereby, yet with willing feet carries contagion to wider circles still.

The temptations and inducements to evil

presented by sin are legion. Every faculty, emotion, passion, and sense are assailed with seductive skill so that on every side of his nature man is drawn into disobedience and transgression. The world, the flesh, and the devil are sleepless in their efforts to lead their victims into deeper guilt. False ideals, glittering allurements, sensual enticements, covetous desires, vain ambitions, and indeed temptations of all conceivable kinds are set before the mind with fatal skill and at every opportunity, until men, families, nations, the world of humanity are far astray from God and lie in the arms of the wicked one.

To redeem the family of man, to reconstitute human society on a basis of truth and purity, Christ took upon Himself the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of man. In that likeness he fought, single-handed, the forces of evil, being "in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin." He overcame every foe, and then ascended into heaven, leading captivity captive and giving gifts unto men.

This great king and brother of humanity now calls upon us to engage in His battle, that we may share His purity and enjoy His victory. He called men to His standard in the days of His flesh, He instructed them in

the essential principles of His service, He endowed them with a glorious unction from above, and the first soldiers of the cross went forth in His name equipped in a perfect way for stern conflict and for signal victories.

The profession of the soldier is an arduous one, and makes demands of imperative obligation and implicit obedience on those who embrace it. The call of separation from other pursuits, the obligation of complete devotion to the requirements of the warfare, the entire subjection of the man to his commander, the ready submission to rigid training, the endurance of severe discipline, the sacrifice of all home or family entanglements which interfere with his vocation, and the acceptance of hardship, suffering or death, if occasion should demand them, are necessary conditions of service. A man who is not prepared for these can be no true soldier. He would fail in times of stress and strain, fly in times of danger, collapse in hours of difficulty, and be baffled in conflicting noise and tumult. A soldier faint or half-hearted may be boastful in times of safety, but he will be cowardly when facing the enemy. He will be a bravado in the camp, but a coward in the battle. The recruit must, therefore, be prepared to fully consecrate himself to the

service, and then must be prompt in answering the call to duty, punctual at drill, and valiant in the battle. Such men are of the stuff of which heroes are made. They are not hirelings, but enthusiasts, pledged to a noble cause and readily responsive to the bugle call.

All this has its counterpart in the life of the Christian soldier. His first duty is to answer the call of Christ by enlisting in His service. The step should be taken without hesitation or reserve. The decision will involve anxious thought and sometimes severe struggle. The exceeding evil of sin and the shame of a life of bondage to it must be realised, before the efficacy of the atoning blood of Calvary and the infinite grace of Christ can be appropriated by the sinner. But when this is done, promptly and gladly, with the full consent of the heart, judgment, will and reason, the definite step of full consecration must be taken. This is true conversion: it is the passing from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the liberty of the sons of God. The service of Christ into which the Christian soldier enlists is truly called a state of freedom because it is accepted at the impulse of his own will. The noblest exercise of that

will is to deliberately resolve to follow the profession of a Christian. Paul calls himself the bond-servant of Christ. Yet who was so free, or who ever soared so high on wings of faith and hope as he did? He could do this because he had freely chosen Christ as his leader, commander, and king. It was done at the impulse of love. This was the spring of his life and the inspiration of every thought. A service of love is one of freedom. The Psalmist says, "I will walk at liberty because I keep Thy precepts."

There is one primary and imperative endowment which the Christian soldier receives when he is called and chosen, which is at once a preparation and a qualification for his profession of the most efficient kind. When the Lord Jesus called His disciples from their secular trades and employments they immediately followed Him. For three years they remained in close touch and intimacy with Him, listening to His addresses, witnessing His miracles, gaining a full knowledge of His many-sided character; they also beheld His sufferings at Calvary, saw and conversed with Him many times after the resurrection, and finally beheld His triumphant ascent from Mount Olivet into heaven. This, it might have been supposed,

would have been a sufficient preparation and equipment for the work to which they were designated without any further endowment being considered needful. It was an incomparable training, immeasurably better than the training any college or university can give in these days. It was a training of personal knowledge and testimony. The modern teacher can argue the claims of Christ, can plead the merits of His passion, and appeal with forceful eloquence to the sinner to come to Him for salvation. But the apostles could face the Jewish masses in Jerusalem, or the Gentiles of Athens and Rome, and boldly say—"I heard His sermons on the mountain in Galilee and in the synagogues of Capernaum. I saw Him heal the sick, cure the leper, and raise the dead. I beheld His countenance shining as the sun in its strength on the Mount of Transfiguration, and I looked into His eyes and held Him by the hand after He had passed through Hades and death." They thus had an unspeakable advantage over all subsequent preachers, however capable or learned. But such an equipment was not considered sufficient by Christ. He said to them when speaking pathetic parting words: "Tarry ye in the city until ye be clothed with power

from on high"; "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." In patient obedience they waited until the Day of Pentecost had come, and then the epochal hour in the world's history had struck. Then were the ministers and members of the Church baptized with the Holy Ghost and endued with the power of God. The Church passed from the local and the symbolic stage into the universal and spiritual; the soldiers of Christ opened the gates of the kingdom to the world, wonders were everywhere wrought by their word, and the foundations of Christianity were laid in strength and security.

It is evident that even a three years' course at the college of the Master was not in itself a sufficient equipment for His servants. Something more and greater was required. They needed the constant indwelling of the Holy Spirit, in all His power and in all His quickening agencies, before they were qualified for their calling. That baptism became at once the spring of a full spiritual life within them, and a constant enduement upon them for their achievements in the propagation of the gospel.

The inevitable question therefore arises, if the apostles and so many in the Early

Church, with their unique training and opportunities, could not successfully enter upon their struggle with the empire of evil without the gift of the Holy Ghost, how can we? If they were obliged to wait for this enduement, how much more should we wait for it, who are destitute of the extraordinary advantages which they enjoyed? Those assembled in the upper room in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost were true believers in the Christ. Their patient, continuous waiting for ten days praying for and expecting the great baptism sufficiently attests their sincere and simple love for the Lord Jesus. The elements of real soldiership were manifested in the quiet, obedient attitude they preserved in the interim between the ascension and the outpouring. Therefore the perfect and crowning equipment came, and under its overwhelming influence they arose and made their first magnificent sally against the forces of sin. They took their stand in the deadliest stronghold of the enemy and at once made a capture of three thousand souls for their Captain. This was only the first of a long series of victories won by a handful of recruits, but it resulted in the glorious spiritual heroism which destroyed the ghastly idolatries of Greece

and Rome, which quickened the crass deadness of the masses, and vitalised continents with new hopes and ideals.

To all appearance there could not have been poorer material out of which to create an army of spiritual heroes than the first apostles and believers who formed the Church in Jerusalem. The apostles in their association with Christ had shown a strange incapacity to appreciate the true nature of His mission or of His foundation principles. They were sordid, secular, and selfish in their ideas and purposes, and in the hour of the Master's persecution and passion they forsook Him in the most mean and cowardly fashion. Yet Christ chose them in preference to all the great men who adorned that age. There were men then living who, if they had been enlightened by Christ and born of the Spirit, might have become pillars of unequalled strength and beauty in the Christian Church. There was living in that age, Hillel, the great President of the Sanhedrin, and the first to be honoured with the title of prince for his wisdom and learning. There were Virgil, Lucretius, Ovid, Flaccus, Petronius, Lucan and Persius, all poets of excellence and some of them of unsurpassed genius. There was Livy, most accomplished

of Roman historians, and Apollonius of Tyana, a Pythagorean philosopher of marvellous acuteness. The Lord was not obliged to call the fishermen to be His messengers by lack of more refined material, but He chose the things which were nothing to confound those which were great and mighty. He saw the end from the beginning, He saw the rock-like and enthusiastic nature of Peter, in the rough fisherman of the lakeside, and in the young man at whose feet the murderers of Stephen laid down their clothes His penetrating eye perceived the apostle of flaming zeal, of organising skill, of uncompromising fidelity, and sublime eloquence, who in all high qualities stands first in the Christian kingdom. He could see the rudiments of future greatness in the unpromising material, and He was able to educate and develop it into the noblest builders of the spiritual temple which the world has seen.

What was required so imperatively by the first soldiers of the cross is not less an absolute necessity to-day. The active and aggressive Christian must have the same miraculous and Divine preparation as those of old. It had a transforming and transfiguring effect on the men and women of the first Church, and there is no diminution of

its power to inspire and inflame with holiest ardour believers in Christ to-day. The need of such an enduement is, if possible, more pressing than in times past. The enemies of Christ were never more alert or malicious; they never were so closely compacted or had such immense resources, and it is evident that to meet and defeat them there must be the same united purpose, the same compact movement, the same implicit faith and obedience, but all these *must* be supplemented and crowned by the bestowment of the Holy Spirit in His fullness and power.

The gift is the privilege of every believer. It may be obtained on conditions which may be fulfilled by the humblest and weakest. To wait for it and ask for it, in simple unfaltering faith, is to secure it. As it came on the members of the first Christian Church at the Feast of Pentecost, so it comes on those who in this day are found in the right attitude and spirit.

II

THE SOLDIER'S GIRDLE OF TRUTH

"Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth."—EPH. vi. 14.

"Thou art the Truth!
Questions the ages break against in vain,
Confront the spirit in its untried youth;
It starves while learning poison from the grain:
Thou art the Truth!

Thou art the Truth!
Truth for the mind, grand, glorious, infinite,
A heaven still boundless o'er its highest growth;
Bread for the heart its daily need to meet.
Thou art the Truth!"

"STAND therefore"! This is the first word of command to the Christian soldier who has taken service with the King. He has put on the whole armour of God. The armour is not assumed for hours of sleep or leisure, but for battle. The apostle plays on the word "Stand." He seems

to love it. "Wherefore," he says, "take up the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore"! It is an imperative command. The enemy is unsleeping, untiring, remorseless. "The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him" (Psa. xxxvii. 32). A moment's carelessness may be fatal; to sleep at the post is to be shot at the post, and for the enemy to take the fort. So Paul, as expert a general as the King ever had, says: "Stand therefore"! The soldier must be fully prepared, and he must be alert. "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, watching at the posts of My doors" (Prov. viii. 34). "So then let us not sleep as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. v. 6). Vigilance on the side of the enemy must be counteracted by diligent watching on the part of the Christian. He has the better cause, an infinitely better Commander, and he is assured of victory from the outset. Therefore he has a hope sure and stedfast, and can fight with the exhilaration of triumph in his soul, for his order says: "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

"Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth."

In Oriental lands the people wear loose and flowing robes which are suitable to a restful position or leisurely motion, but which grievously hamper a man in haste or vigorous exercise. Then they are either laid aside or trimly girt around the waist so as to leave the limbs unencumbered for action. Thus of Elijah it is said: "He girded up his loins and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel." A man in a race or a battle is compelled to gather up his garments and make them tight around him, that he may not be fettered in his effort.

It is so with our appetites, desires, affections and sympathies. They are part of ourselves, but become loose and demoralised if they are not firmly held in control, and governed by wise and gracious principles. The soul has been sometimes described as the dress of the spirit, which contains within itself tastes, affinities, propensities which are ever contending for mastery, but which must be gripped and regulated if they are not to become hindrances in the action of life.

The loins in man are the seat of the muscular system. In them reside the power

of locomotion. Many vital organs find their centre there, and in them is the spring of muscular action. Their free and easy movement is impeded by full and flowing robes which flutter in the breeze and prevent the full play of the limbs. Nothing should be allowed to embarrass the athlete or the soldier in the race or the battle.

In a parallel passage Peter speaks of the "loins of the mind" (1 Pet. i. 13). The word used is "*dianoia*," and generally refers in the New Testament to the intellect or understanding. Therefore the thoughts, intentions, desires, and motives of human nature are included in the phrase, and the absolute necessity of keeping them braced up so as to be definite, firm, clear, and healthy is enforced. This interpretation is the more natural because all moral action must take its rise in the mind, and primarily from the thoughts engendered there. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. xxiii. 7).

Thoughts, then desires, then determinations, then actions, and then the issues of life. This is the natural succession of man's consciousness, by which character is built up and the man takes his stamp and impress for ever. The loins of the mind con-

cern the operations of man's higher qualities, involving the reason, the will, the judgment, and other noble faculties. These are all to be gathered up and firmly held by the girdle of truth, than which nothing can be more beautiful or efficient. At the root of all the mind's workings are the thoughts, which are the true index of character. A man is not ultimately to be judged by his opinions or professed beliefs. The Bible touches the springs of life when it speaks of "the thoughts and imaginations of the heart." The thoughts that rise secretly and spontaneously in the mind form the man. When they wander at their own will, settling here and there in various directions, giving rise to desires, which strengthen themselves, until the will exercises itself and translates desires into deeds. Thoughts are incited within the man by objects which attract and hold them. The miser thinks of wealth, and its attainment becomes an insanity with him. The *roué* thinks of sensual pleasure and becomes a voluptuary, and the philanthropist thinks of deeds of self-denial and becomes a benefactor to his generation. Thus the thoughts stamp the man—they give him his superscription. To think much upon an object is to seek it,

and seeking means life or death. It is a mournful thing when a man's thoughts are loose or unstable; when he has no fixed aims and no high ideals. It is worse still when these are immoral and degrading. Then if a man is a genius he degenerates into a demon; if he is rich, or high in rank, he is dwarfed and shrivelled into utter insignificance.

It is a solemnising consideration that character abides. When we leave this world we can only carry our character into the unknown future. We leave all else behind us, but it remains with us and determines our condition for ever.

Paul tells us we must have the loins girded with truth. The girdle was an important article of dress in old times; if the garments were loose the armour could not be put on, and therefore the girdle was fastened round the waist tightly, and all incumbrance removed. The soldier's girdle was commonly made of leather, but officers sometimes had the leather embossed with silver. A finer kind was made of linen embroidered with silk. "I bound thee with a tire of fine linen" (Ezek. xvi. 10). Others were wrought with gold or silver thread, while others were studded with precious stones or

pearls. In the girdle of the soldier the sword or dagger was often suspended, and in a pocket inside the purse of money was deposited. It is frequently used figuratively in the Bible, and of the Messiah it was prophesied: "And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins" (Isa. xi. 5).

The Christian soldier is commanded to girdle his loins with Truth. This is the illuminated letter which introduces the soldier's marching orders. Truth is the essential condition of order, it is the principle of organisation, it is the secret of harmonious co-operation. It holds and binds the universe together. It makes efficient government possible. Without it there are conflicting interests, divisive jealousies, maladministration and corruption, all leading to anarchy and eventual destruction. What the kingdom of evil must be in its eternal contentions and rivalries may not even be imagined, but its final catastrophe is only delayed by its universal and concentrated hatred of truth and goodness, which consolidates all its forces for action against God and His Christ. In the moral and spiritual domain happiness and progress can only exist in proportion to the measure in which truth exists and pervades

the commonwealth. This is the secret of healthfulness; this brings the enjoyment of peace and becomes an inspiration both of glorious enterprise and true development. Truth gives compactness and undeviating regularity to the Divine arrangements in the universe, and corresponding blessedness to His intelligent creatures.

Truth is one of the glorious attributes of God. It represents the constancy, faithfulness, and stedfastness of God in all His works in nature, and in that revelation of grace by which He governs the world of man. By it is expressed the sure fulfilment of His promises, and the unerring operation of His laws either in the material or the moral world. Nothing is more frequently referred to in the Scriptures as a solid groundwork for man's faith to rest upon in regard to God's dealings with him, both in the arrangements of Providence or the work of redemption through Christ. "The sum of Thy Word is truth, and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth for ever" (Psa. cxix. 160). From God truth flows, and becomes the bulwark of all who trust and obey Him. "His truth is a shield and buckler" (Psa. xci. 4).

The truth with which the Christian soldier

is to be girded is not an accumulation of texts, or a set of opinions, or a formulated creed. These are all useful and necessary, but it is the underlying principle of reality and sincerity that is meant by the Apostle Paul in this connection. It were to degrade Christ to the level of the sophists to suppose that He came simply to teach a set of dogmas or a catalogue of instructions. He was the truth, and He came to impart to man the essential principle of truth and to diffuse its secret influence throughout his whole nature by giving solid reality of thought, aim, motive, and purpose to his life. Thus the reign of truth is set up within him, and the control of lies, shams, and pretences is broken and destroyed. Then man enjoys the life Divine; he rests on enduring substances; he enjoys the vision of God; the bondage, the practice, and the pollution of sin are done away, and He who was the Truth incarnate says: "Behold, I make all things new"!

In thinking of the Christ as the Truth, we must not regard Him as only speaking the truth. A person may speak truth with his lips and lie in his heart. Few men prophesied in the old time more truly or grandly concerning the Messiah than did Balaam as

he sat on the mountain-side and chanted his parable, and no man ever more basely led his fellow-men into grievous sin. Christ said: "I am the Truth." This gives undying power and saving influence to His words. They are eternally true because He was true in the essence of His nature. The girdle of truth to be worn by the Christian concerns the inmost of the mind, and radically affects the convictions of the soul. Thoughts that are rooted and grounded in truth give rise to desires and conduct that are sincere and righteous. A man may by education, association, or environment, hold true ideas on many subjects, and these will in a measure help to give strength to his character; but he needs to have his moral nature held, influenced and saturated with truth as the basal element of his life. Truthfulness of mind, a deep, abiding, all-pervading love of truth for its own sake is the condition of a strong, fearless, vigilant nature, and the foundation of a brave and victorious career.

Based on a foundation of reality and sincerity there must of necessity be a superstructure of correct beliefs and opinions concerning the most important and vital subjects. Right views of the nature, character, and qualities of God; of our own being,

condition, and destiny ; of the Christ as God incarnate, the Saviour of sinners, and as the Brother of humanity, must be entertained and firmly held, or eventually there will be demoralisation of the nature resulting from false and erroneous views on these great subjects. Concerning theological systems or formal creeds it is not needful to say anything at this point, but as to the large mass of people who have neither the disposition nor the opportunity to study these vast subjects in a systematic way, it is of vital importance that they should have at least so much knowledge of them as will afford them safe guidance in life, and be a preservative against falsehood and error. A man may understand sufficient grammar to enable him to speak correctly without having a thorough knowledge of the science or technology of language. But the lover of truth will be led to seek after right ideas on all matters which intimately affect his spiritual state and eternal destiny. The knowledge of such truth as every one requires for right direction in life's battle is to be found in Christ and in Him alone. "What is truth?" said Pilate to Jesus, not in a jesting spirit as Lord Bacon affirms, but more probably in a mood of sad and despairing satire on the possibility of ever finding it.

The solution of the question, which has been asked by a thousand anxious thoughtful souls through the ages of history, is found in the words of the Christ as He stood before the Governor: "To this end have I been born, and to this end have I come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John xviii. 37). Therefore did the Eternal Father speak from heaven to the followers of Jesus, as on the mountain top the Divine glory enwrapt and transfigured Him, saying: "This is my beloved Son hear Him." As the Truth, Jesus revealed it, embodied it, lived it, and now imparts it to all who become His disciples. The qualities of truth as coming from Him are a frequent theme of rejoicing to the sacred writers. It is to them precious above gold or silver or pearls of greatest price. They valued it because it was pure. "Thy word is very pure, therefore Thy servant loveth it" (Psa. cxix. 140). It was sanctifying. "Sanctify them in Thy truth; Thy word is truth" (John xvii. 17). It was liberating. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John xvii. 17, 32). It was strengthening. "Wisdom is a strength to the wise man more than ten rulers which are in a city"

(Eccles. vii. 19). And it was everlasting. "For the Lord is good . . . and His truth endureth to all generations" (Psa. c. 5). An all-important question to the Christian recruit is, how can truthfulness of mind be obtained? Then another presents itself as to the special truths with which he must be acquainted so as to be expert in all matters relating to his profession. The former question deals with the latter and holds the key to the position. It has to do with a total and radical change of man's nature, in which he dies to his old self, and is renewed in his moral and spiritual being. This is what Peter calls "putting on the Divine nature"; what Paul calls "putting on the Lord Jesus," or, as he again describes it, "casting off the works of darkness and putting on the armour of light." This is the change which Christ speaks of as "conversion" and as being "born again." The change is an imperative necessity for every man who desires to enter the service of the King. The sin of the past life must be absolved, the bias of an evil will must be corrected, the fleshly appetites and lusts must be overcome, a new heart and a right spirit must be created in man, and his affections must be set on things above.

Only one Person through the ages of time has ever professed to be able to effect this complete transformation of man's nature. It is the Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. No great religious teacher, or founder of old world religions, ever dared to offer to save man from sin or to re-create the moral nature. All that Zoroaster, or Sakya-Muni, or Brahma, ever said to the sinner of earth was, SAVE THYSELF; by lustrations, or sacrifices, or pilgrimages, or flagellations, choose your own way, but, somehow, sinner, save thyself. Never more help than this has come from all the great religious reformers and teachers through the ages. But Christ stands incomparable and unique in history as bringing the purifying and re-creating power, and crying: "Look unto Me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else" (Isa. xlv. 22).

This looking to Christ brings the truthful state and the truth-loving mind. It does this by the casting forth of evil and the cleansing from sin. This is salvation by faith, the simple child-like acceptance of the word of Jesus, and looking to Him as the Saviour of the soul and the Teacher of Divine Truth, to the end of life. When this happy change

is effected, the truth is to be sought and found in the teachings of Jesus, the right understanding of which is to be received through the light of the Holy Spirit. Christ says, "He shall teach you all things and guide you into all truth." The truth, as revealed by Christ, touches every subject of first importance that concerns man. He teaches it, and then illustrates it in His life and conduct. He adorned His doctrine by a life of holy and helpful deeds, which alike shed light on the nature and character of God, and the laws and principles which should regulate the life of man. As to the former He said: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Many people yearn after the palpable vision of God. "If I could only see the face of God," a lady once said, "I could pray to Him far more really." Her desire was granted if she had only considered, and entered into the meaning of the words: "Believe Me, that I am in the Father and the Father in Me." As Jesus is seen, healing the sick, comforting the sorrowful, raising the dead, and saving the sinner, we see the Father; as we hear Him relating the parables of the prodigal, the good Samaritan, and the pharisee and publican, we hear the Father. These acts and sayings are the revelation

of the Father's heart, and Jesus shows us the true God not in metaphysical propositions but in actual, living demonstration, "full of grace and truth."

Jesus Christ also teaches man principles and precepts which are a sufficient guide for every duty and relation he is required to fulfil in life. This is not done by detailing minutely the multitude of acts which fill up the daily round of human existence, but by giving certain general rules of conduct which apply to everything claiming a man's attention. A full knowledge of these principles and of all things which touch man's interests is afforded in the Christian soldier's guide-book, called the Bible, in a manner so plain and interesting that it has become the Book of the Race, and is daily being scattered broadcast the wide world through.

The truth, God's Truth, as lived, spoken, and taught by Jesus is that of which the Christian's girdle is to be composed. It is an incomparable girdle; it envelopes the man and gives compactness to all his thoughts, concentration to all his purposes, definiteness to his ideas, and singleness to his aims. "This one thing I do," said the great apostle, in reference to his sublime purpose in life. He had no time and no desire for

a second thing, but the first was so comprehensive and magnificent that it made him the greatest hero of Christianity, and his achievements the wonder of the world.

The girdle of truth gives power of endurance in the struggle and strain of life. Whether it is a fight with severe afflictions or cruel persecutions, or wrestlings with deadly errors, or carrying the gospel to the furthest recesses of heathendom, the unwearying, quenchless ardour and patience of the Christian soldier is an unsurpassed wonder. Paul, our pattern soldier, gives a thrilling catalogue of his labours, sufferings and perils in the cause of the gospel, and then adds, with the utmost buoyancy of soul: "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). If an instance of untiring and ceaseless struggle in behalf of right is required, a glance at the indomitable resolution and labour of Athanasius during a period of forty years, is an admirable illustration of the power of the truth to maintain a man's heart in trying dangers and virulent opposition. He was deposed from office, anathematised, exiled and denounced, but "he bated no jot of heart or hope but still held on" until the great doctrine of the Trinity was established as the belief of the

Church. His attitude during the prolonged struggle is one of the sublimest incidents of history. The lines written by Dr. George Wilson, poet and scientist, are worthy of being pondered by every one putting on the armour of light :—

"O Athanasius, thy too subtle creed
Makes my heart tremble when I hear it read ;
And my flesh quivers when the priest proclaims
God's vengeance on the unbeliever's head.

But I do honour thee for that brave word,
Against the heretic so bravely hurled ;
'Though no one else believe, I'll hold my faith,
I, Athanasius, against the world.'

It was not well to judge thy fellow-men ;
Thou wert a sinful mortal like us all ;
Vengeance is God's, none but Himself doth know
On whom the terrors of His wrath will fall.

But it was well, believing as thou didst,
Like standard bearer with thy flag unfurled ;
To blazon on thy banner those brave words,
'I, Athanasius, against the world.'

Thy faith is mine, but that is not my theme,
'Tis thy example I would preach to all ;
Whatever each believes and counts as true,
Of things in heaven or earth or great or small.

If he believes it let him stand and say,
Although in scorn a thousand lips are curled;
'Though no one else believe, I'll hold my faith,
I, Athanasius, against the world.'"

The girdle of truth around a man enables him to move with swift and willing feet in the service of the King. Elisha and Gehazi were arrested on their journey by the Shunamitish woman who related to the prophet her tale of woe. Then Elisha said to Gehazi: "Gird up thy loins and take my staff in thy hand and go thy way." The occasion required speed, and the servant girded for a race could move more swiftly than the older man. Truth gives the impulse and the power of rapid progress. It is ardent to overcome the enemy and to reach the goal. It pants for the victory, and cries, "Forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The girdle of truth is unspeakably beautiful, and it makes all else in the soldier's equipment beautiful. It is ornamented with precepts, testimonies, promises and experiences of infinite value and preciousness. The character embraced by it challenges and

receives admiration even from the enemy, while they who are destitute of it are despised by their professed friends. Falseness and pretence are not only repulsive, but disabling and destructive. The mind that indulges in lies, carries poison within it which infects the whole nature, and works such mischief that it is unable to decide between right and wrong, so utterly is the moral nature contaminated. Then the words of the prophet are fulfilled: "He feedeth on ashes, a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isa. xliv. 20). The greatest biographer of Voltaire gives an account of a case, in which the hero of his book was called upon to give evidence in a court of justice. He gave false testimony and thus was guilty of perjury, but his biographer adds: "This was a small thing in Voltaire's estimation." In this sad and fatal defect we may read the secret of the failure to effect the uplift of men by one of the most highly gifted men of modern days. But the spirit and practice of truth are an adornment of life and character of incomparable excellence and attractiveness, which is confessed by many who can make no pretence to its possession, and who, in

their better moments, mourn over their sad deficiency. With this preparation a man may stand before every foe and not be afraid. The devil, who was a liar from the beginning, flees before the soldier of truth. Wherefore the assurance is given : "Be subject to God, but resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jas. iv. 7).

III

THE IMPENETRABLE BREASTPLATE

"Having put on the breastplate of righteousness."—EPH. vi. 14.

"Then learn to scorn the praise of men,
And learn to lose with God;
For Jesus won the world through shame,
And beckons thee, His road.

For right is right, since God is God,
And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin."

FABER.

WHEN the soldier stands girded he must put on his armour, so as to be prepared for defence or for attacking the foe. After the girdle which gives compactness to the frame there comes in natural order the breastplate. Therefore the apostle

says, "Having put on the breastplate of righteousness." The breast covers the heart and the lungs. These are the very seat and centre of a man's life. By the lungs the air is inhaled which contains the oxygen, the essential element for man's unceasing exhilaration. They also exhale the injurious and depleted elements from the body, and are always hard at work fulfilling their beneficent mission for man's welfare. By the heart, from the first moment of life to the last, the warm current of rich and enriching blood is sent to the extremities of the body, leaving as it goes its fertilising and strengthening qualities, until having exhausted its store of virtue it returns to its fountain to receive from the lungs a new supply of vivifying power, and thus every moment these incomparably helpful organs are vigorously working to impart to man's whole system the healthful stimulus it needs for its constant functions. The heart and lungs are the vital organs of man's physical being. He may be deprived of many members and yet live, but not without the organs lodged within the breast. These are invaluable and imperative to the whole body.

Therefore, to preserve them from harm is a first duty in regard to health. Diseases

touching them are the most dangerous and fatal. Heart complaint or consumption are the most dreaded foes of health, and any means to diminish the ravages of these fell destroyers are sought after by medical or scientific experts with undying enthusiasm.

The apostle, with his usual aptness, makes admirable use of this analogy. The soldier needs a stout heart and healthy lungs. They must be guarded with special care, and every means to keep them vigorous must be used. The loins carry him on the march, sustain him in the turmoil of the battle, and are the means whereby he stands the discipline of the drill. But even the loins are fed by the blood forced from the heart, and the blood in its turn is maintained in freshness and richness by the oxygen from the lungs, so that in the armour worn in ancient days the strongest portion was the breastplate or coat of mail.

Skins of beasts were probably the earliest material used to protect the breast of the soldier. These were abandoned when the art of working in metals had attained a measure of perfectness, and the use of iron, steel, and brass for the purpose of the cuirass or breastplate became common. The Egyptians made their breastplates of eleven rows of metal plates, well secured by brass pins ;

but many were made of felt or linen, with scales of iron or copper fastened to them. The Jews wore a coat of mail made of brass, or sometimes of leather covered with brazen scales. In later days scale or ringed armour was worn, with many other kinds, some being richly damascened and engraved. The breastplate was made to fit to the body, and generally came to the loins; sometimes it was made longer, so as to cover the middle of the body. But in any case it was made strong so as to shield the heart and lungs from the sword thrust or the pointed arrow.

The Christian soldier is commanded to put on the breastplate of righteousness. The heart of the believer must be guarded above all keeping. The heart in the Bible bulks largely, and has a wide psychical meaning. The functions and operations of thought are far more frequently attributed to it than to the head. As the blood goes from the heart to all parts of the body, so from the heart of the soul, as it were, go out all mental and moral activities. To it also all these return. To the centre of the soul there is a return of all that went out from it, in the experience of fruits and results. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness" (Prov. xiv. 10). It is remarkable how often in the Bible the word is used

to cover nearly all the highest faculties of man. It is a figure whereby are expressed the very fountains of intellectual life. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life"; or, as the margin more exactly gives it, "above all that thou guardest" (Prov. iv. 23). As the blood flows from the heart, so in man, as the figure most likely to be easily understood, it is made to represent the conscience, self-knowledge, and, indeed, all knowledge. All inner human movements are denoted by the word, both of the reason and the intellect. This is the distinction between the ancient and modern use of the word. In the Old Testament it not only signifies emotional or volitional elements in man, but specially the intellectual. In the later Scriptures the Greek habit of distinguishing the rational from the emotional finds place. A few references will show the comprehensiveness of the word as used in Scripture. It describes the inner man in contrast with the outer. "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever" (Psa. lxxiii. 26). It refers to the inner man as including mind, affections, will and emotions. "If from thence ye shall seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him if thou search after

Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. iv. 29). It is used to express the workings of the mind. "And thou shalt consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his own son, so the Lord chastened thee" (Deut. viii. 5). But, indeed, the references are too numerous to be presented here. The heart is made to be the focus of personal inner life, a centre in which every influence of moral or religious condition is appropriated and assimilated. Therefore what enters into it is a possession of moral quality, and what comes out from it is a moral production. The heart is represented as the seat of depravity, because sin belongs to the central life, defiling the whole nature, and poisoning it in its very well-spring. This is why the gospel aims at the restoration of human nature by promising a new heart as its first boon to the sinner. It seeks a thorough reconstitution of man in holiness, and begins therefore with the centre. God says: "A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you; I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26). That is the Divine side of the great work, which is to be continued on man's part by the constant exercise of faith.

"Purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts xv. 9). There is a Divine simplicity in this method of dealing with man's salvation. By making the heart the seat of the moral life, the nature of sin and the operation of grace are set forth so clearly that he who runs may read.

The advice of the wise man to keep the heart "above all that thou guardest" is thus seen to be most urgent. As the apple of the eye is to be guarded as the most precious of the senses, or as the principal jewel in the monarch's crown is vigilantly watched, so must be the heart, out of which are the issues of life, and for the redemption of which an infinite ransom was given by the Son of God.

For the Christian soldier is provided the invulnerable breastplate of righteousness. The girdle is of truth, which signifies reality and faithfulness. Righteousness is the great moral quality which is at an infinite distance from sin, and the parent of purity, peace, and joy wherever these are found. In relation to the Eternal God it means holiness as applied in the region of law and government. It is holiness in administration. God is love, but the love is based on righteousness; and the great work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the

redemption of man, whilst being a manifestation of eternal love, is stated also to have been accomplished, "to show forth His righteousness . . . that He might be just and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

The revelation of the Divine righteousness throughout the early ages of history was an ever-unfolding process of enlightenment. It drew out the passionate admiration and loyalty of the most gifted minds of the old world. Abraham, the friend of God, and the father of the faithful, was possessed by this root sentiment, and when mystified by God's action on one occasion he exclaimed in wonderment, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" As the stream of time flowed on, this great Divine quality was displayed ever more clearly "in divers portions and in divers manners"; in the statutes and precepts of the Mosaic law; in the rights and ceremonies of the ancient Church, but most eminently in the atoning sacrifice of Calvary, wherein God's infinite hatred of sin and love of righteousness is displayed to the entire universe.

Righteousness in relation to man consists in having a right state of nature, a right relation to God, and in practising righteousness and truth continually. A man must be

right before he can do right, but the question, How can sinful man be just with God? has been the problem of the ages, which man has vainly endeavoured to solve. It is not intended to confuse these pages with theological controversies, nor to indulge in theological nomenclature. But it may be helpful to observe in passing that the old phrase, "imputed righteousness," may be forgotten as having spent its force. It was unfortunate that it was ever introduced into the Authorised Version of the Scriptures, and it is a great gain to have it omitted from the Revised Version. The more correct rendering of "reckoned" saves us from misunderstanding the apostolic teaching. Although man has no righteousness of his own, when he lays hold of Christ as his Saviour and Lord by faith, this act of faith is "reckoned to him for righteousness," because the saving grace of Christ is thus appropriated by the believer, and from that moment he lives in the practice of righteousness after the pattern of the Lord Jesus.

Thus it is that the awful results of the fall are retrieved, man is brought into right relations with God, his heart is cleansed from sin, the way of truth is opened out before him, and the Holy Spirit is given as the guide

and teacher of the Christian until his journey ends.

It is impossible adequately to describe the marvellous results of this transforming change. Every subject which is to be considered, every duty which is to be performed, even every recreation which is indulged in, are looked at in the dry light of righteousness. Its line is straight, undeviating, and having application to man's entire life. It concerns equally public life, church belief and practice, national administration, business transactions and private conduct. Modern life is being honeycombed by lax and injurious views on this vital subject. It is held by many members and office-bearers in Christian churches, who hold public office, that because they are municipal or civil functionaries, that it is permissible for them to engage in functions which are more than doubtful in their nature. Such men, when bearing the mayoralty of a city, will preside at a licensed victuallers' dinner, or patronise theatrical performances, on the ground that such things are usually done. The members of the Government of a Christian land will be found supporting legislation of an immoral character and tendency, on the ground that allegiance to their party requires them to sacrifice their

principles. It is sadly too common at this time to find Christian churches adopting worldly entertainments for the sake of filling the exchequer or drawing a crowd. They therefore advertise nigger troupes, theatrical representations, dances, and have drink licences and lotteries at bazaars. All these things are now frequently carried out in connection with church effort for the support of the worship of that God who said to His people: "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed."

It is the same with the private action of many Christians. In trade, upon the plea that business is business, and that a man must live, practices of adulteration, underselling, quack advertisements and short measure are indulged in, whilst large numbers of church members and even many ministers are shareholders in breweries and distilleries, receiving the dividends of a tainted trade, which spreads poverty and misery throughout the land. Some church members, on the pretence of being broad-minded, have card-parties where bridge and other forms of gambling are played and much money lost and won. Many other questionable practices are tolerated because society requires obedience to its dictates, or

closes its doors against those who abstain from them. The effects of such conduct are appalling when looked at in the long run. Whether it be the civil functionary or the statesman, or the tradesman, or a church, or a private church member, it means deterioration and ultimate ruin to all higher and nobler things. To take one example, the case of a church which soils itself in the way spoken of. In a short time it becomes depleted of spiritual life and power, meetings for prayer and fellowship die out, the young people form perverted tastes, and in time the church is deserted.

On the other hand, the practice of righteousness in any direction, without compromise or accommodation to the world, becomes a coat of mail, impervious to every attack of the evil one. The secret spirit of a man protected by such a breastplate preserves its purity, grace and strength. The tradesman so protected is unharmed by temptations to dishonesty, he tells no lies, and has recourse to no tricks. The young man or woman, when assailed by inducements to drink or gamble, or to indulge in sensuality, has a way of escape opened and scorns the suggestion.

Nothing but the power of righteousness which creates intense and constant aspirations God-ward can be a true panoply for man's better nature. The old saints wore this breastplate, and it kept them as mighty heroes of faith. The reformers, missionaries, and evangelists of the Church rejoiced in its power to keep them bold and faithful in difficult circumstances or agonising sufferings. Righteousness imparted by God, which ever strengthens itself by faith and incessant discipline, brings eternal victory over sin and death.

There is a divineness of simplicity in the law of righteousness as the rule of life. All things touching man's character and conduct must be submitted to one touchstone. The question is not one as to expediency, or pleasure, or even utility, but of righteousness. If a thing is not right, however attractive or desirable it may seem, whether touching business, amusements, engagements or companions, it must be left, and the right thing done at any cost or sacrifice. If the wrong is chosen a snare has been entered which will bring sorrow and eventual destruction.

A breastplate was the principal piece of armour worn by the ancient soldier, and righteousness is the root principle in the

Christian. From it springs all the virtues and qualities of human nature. It is therefore essential to a proper equipment in life.

The breastplate guarded and preserved the vital organs of the body. So righteousness leaves no avenue by which the evil one can enter unwatched or undefended.

A breastplate was made by deft hands with care and skill. The metal was well tempered and finished; it was often richly chased and beautifully ornamented. The righteousness of the Christian is imparted by Christ—it is of Divine handiwork, it is impenetrable mail, and it preserves the Christian soldier faultless until the day when he is presented blameless before the glory of the King with exceeding joy.

IV

THE SANDALS OF PEACE

"Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace."—EPH. vi. 15.

"Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess,
The beauty of Thy peace."

WHITTIER.

THERE is order as well as aptness in the use the Apostle Paul makes of similes. First the loins are girded, then the coat of mail is put on, and then the feet are to be well shod. First the reality of nature and fidelity of soul which the truth only can impart, then the righteousness of character and conduct which the grace of Christ brings and confers upon believers. After these the feet which carry man wherever his mission

in life calls him must be carefully shod that they may be preserved from all harm in the journey. The shoes or sandals worn in old times, for they were both in use, were made of leather, felt, cloth or wood. They were sometimes ornamented, inwrought with lines of gold, silver or silk, and occasionally embroidered with jewels. They were often bound with iron to which practice the promise referred: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be." It was equally necessary to keep the feet guarded whether on a journey or in a battle. Roads were little cared for in eastern lands, and the feet were liable to be torn by quicks and briars in the way, or, more often still, venomous reptiles or insects would suddenly sting and poison the feet that were unprotected. Many roads were filled with rough stones which cut the feet, so that to be well shod was imperative for travellers. The work of the feet is to carry the man wheresoever he will. They bear the whole burden of the body and must be sustained in strength for the purpose. The law of reciprocity is the law of the physical nature. The feet draw from the heart the blood they need, and from the loins the muscular energy required

to sustain them, and they repay the service by carrying the whole frame when required. It is for the good of the whole that the feet be guarded from harm. If they are disabled it is a calamity of the worst kind, as it shuts the man out from many employments and innumerable duties. He can do more without hands than feet, although the hands are capable of a thousand expert and helpful offices in life. But the fact that the feet are the instruments of locomotion makes them imperative to soldiers and to travellers from place to place. The feet bring the living presence, the very man himself with all his attributes and capabilities to the sphere of action.

The word "preparation," used in the instruction of the apostle, signifies more exactly readiness or promptness. It is *hetoimasia*, a word only used once in this form in the Bible, and indicating alacrity and even eagerness of spirit for the conflict. "We are not only ready," says Dr. Dale, "we are eager for every good work. We are men whose feet are well shod; they can stand firm and they can run; they are prepared to resist the shock of the enemy's assault and to attack and pursue him when the assault is repelled." Therefore the soldier must have

his "feet shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace." The Christian in this relation is a model soldier. One of our great commanders, after a splendid campaign, was sitting quietly at home one day, no one but himself being in the house, when a messenger arrived summoning him to the immediate command of an important enterprise in a foreign land. He asked no questions, but at once made hasty preparations and left home for his destination. When his family returned to the house they found it empty, but the key was hung on a twig of a tree outside the door, and inside was a note of explanation and farewell. The readiness of this man does not fully represent the alacrity of the Christian when duty calls. When Dr. Morrison felt the call of God to undertake foreign mission work, he not only responded with gladness, but he sent up the prayer: "That God would station him in that part of the missionary field where the difficulties were the greatest and to all human appearances the most insurmountable." How fully this prayer was answered his subsequent course abundantly showed. The eager and prompt response to duty comes from a deep and genuine enthusiasm for the cause to be fought out. In the great struggle between

the North and South in America, at the battle of Manasses, a soldier mortally wounded was being carried off the field by his comrades. His commanding officer expressed sympathy with him. "Yes, yes," he replied, "they have done for me, but my father's there yet: our cause is there yet;" and raising himself in the arms of his companions, his face lighting up with sunshine, he cried with pathetic ardour, "and liberty is there yet!" His emotion was too great for him and he swooned away. This is the spirit of the Christian soldier, he is in ardent sympathy with the high purposes which Jesus came to earth to accomplish.

The enthusiasm of humanity was the glory of the mission of Christ, and the enthusiasm of the Divine glory is the highest mission of man. These are both combined in the gospel of peace. It is truly God's Spell, the literal expression of the mind and will of God. Peace is as truly the aspiration of the race of man from the earliest times. Even warriors of insatiable ambition have professed that their ultimate idea has been to establish lasting peace among the nations. The laureate poet of ancient Rome sang of a millennium of universal peace, when the empire was filling the earth with the dis-

cord and horrors of war. David, the most warlike king of Israel, with hands too bloody to be allowed to build the temple of holy worship, could sing of peace as flushing the future with roseate hues of brightness, and all great poets have followed the strains of Isaiah in anticipating a day when men shall beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning-hooks. Wordsworth, in philosophic mood, wrote fierce lines for war as an instrument in the hands of God, declaring that slaughter was His daughter, but in his normal state of mind he looked from his lofty mount of vision and saw the future of the world blessed with the boundless happiness of perfect peace. So all politicians and patriots who have been responsive to the needs of the people, have been the warmest advocates of peace, and of late the voice that spoke the Sermon on the Mount has been heard reiterating its lessons and precepts in the powerful denunciation of war and the passionate plea for peace from the soul of Count Tolstoi. From a thousand witnesses might be presented instances how deep is the longing for "peace on earth" in the human breast. This longing is an evidence of how fully Christ has given expression to the higher feelings of humanity. He was

announced as the Prince of Peace by the poet laureate of the Old Testament, and by all the great poets of the Hebrew Church His kingdom was hailed as one of peace and righteousness. The outcome of His reign was to be one of universal joy through the prevalence of peace. In the accomplishment of this glorious design He did not simply come to proclaim peace, He first made peace between God and man, and then diffused the spirit of it in the hearts of men. The angels who announced the advent of the Christ proclaimed peace between heaven and earth, and that was effectually established by the atoning sacrifice presented on Calvary. Wherever that offering has been appropriated by the sinner in simple faith, peace has been realised passing all understanding. "For He is our peace who hath made both one . . . that He might create in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and He came and preached peace to you that were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh" (Eph. ii. 14–17). Out of this crowning work of time, so far as its influence extends, comes peace among men and nations. Deplorable as is the condition

of the nations of Christendom to-day as to war establishments, there is a new earth since the days of the old world monarchies, such as Babylon, Assyria, Greece, and Rome. The record of the world to the birth of Christ had been one of bloodshed and indescribable atrocity. The temple of Janus, which was shut in time of peace and open in time of war, had not been closed until the birth of Christ for two hundred years. The slaughter of men through those ages had been incalculable, and attended with such unnameable cruelties as have stained the name of the present Sultan, who for blind and diabolical ferocity is an anachronism of the century and a blot on modern history.

On the other hand, it is an awful reproach to our modern civilisation that the Christian nations are mutually distrustful of each other, and maintain enormous armaments for the purpose of holding each other in check. Their exchequers are annually depleted, and the resources of the people exhausted, for the expenses of armies and navies, which in themselves are causes of demoralisation wherever they exist. Every few years an increase of war expenditure is urged on the plea that the only way to preserve peace is to be thoroughly prepared for war. Then, as

the result of such an appeal in one nation, all the surrounding nations insist on similar increases, and thus a war tariff is ever growing heavier for the mass of the people. Everybody condemns war, and mourns because of it, yet all support it, and even the Peace Society, in relation to the South African war, found it inexpedient to pursue their usual propaganda for the time being. A Council of the Christian Powers was held a few years since to consider the question of a general reduction in the national armaments. But following soon after the Conference came deadly wars, engaged in by some of those same nations, wherein immense numbers of lives were lost and unbearable debts fastened on the people. Even leaders in the Churches were found supporting these wars in an excited manner. It was an anomalous thing that Louis Napoleon commenced his reign in France with a programme of peace, but he finished it by engaging in sanguinary and ruinous wars which not only made France bankrupt, but shortened his own life. Meantime the world is hungering for peace. It is not the masses of the people who seek for war. It is the ambition of rulers, or the selfishness of certain classes who are interested in war for their own purposes. If

the people were themselves fairly consulted before war is declared with any nation there would be fewer wars in the future history of the world.

The peace which the Christian soldier is ready to proclaim is the greatest gift which Jesus had to bestow upon a world of discord and sorrow. Many blessings He had to impart, but peace He reserved as His special legacy to His disciples in the moment of their grief, when He was about to leave them as sheep among wolves. Then He spoke His tenderest word: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful" (John xiv. 27). The experience of such a peace, so Divine in its origin, so tranquillising in its nature, so joy-imparting in result, gives at once strength and rapture to the soul. Then comes the overpowering impulse to make it known to others, indeed to all mankind. Then the believer puts on the sandals of alacrity and goes forth to invite sinners to be reconciled to God, to make known to them the way of peace by faith in Jesus, to diffuse an atmosphere of peace where division and discord reigns, to bind up tenderly hearts in which passion and hatred

have produced bitterness, and to settle long-continued strife. This is a work so ineffably beautiful that angels would gladly undertake the gracious mission.

This peace, when widely diffused, transforms human society. When the battle of Waterloo had been fought out the field presented the most ghastly sight that could be imagined, but in a few days it was a mass of waving glory. The earth, enriched with streams of blood, had given growth to a harvest of brilliantly-coloured flowers, which multitudes of people hastened from long distances to look upon. Such a marvellous change comes over the depraved nature of man when the peace of Christ enters into it. The guilt has been purged, the sin forgiven, the loathsomeness removed, and the Divine Spirit has given birth to flowers and fruits of holiness, beautiful exceedingly. The change is great because the peace is perfect. Nothing disturbs or destroys it. The believer is rooted and grounded in love, and he draws from eternal fountains the fulness of Christ into himself. Thus the peace is as a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. The supply, therefore, is perennial, the martyr's fire cannot quench it, the scourge of persecution does not disturb it, the grind

of poverty, nor the brand of sorrow, nor the fretting doggedness of misfortune have no power to destroy it, but in all experiences in life the word of the Lord abideth: "A stedfast mind, thou keepest in perfect peace because it trusteth in thee" (Isa. xxvi. 3).

Where the Christian soldier goes out with that spirit of alacrity which Christ Himself showed, when before the foundation of the world He anticipated His redeeming work and cried, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," there is no message which the sons of men drink in with such avidity as that of peace. It is more than a coincidence, it is a fact realised in numerous cases wherever the gospel messenger has carried the good news that is referred to by the prophet in the buoyant words, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation (Isa. lii. 7). Many years ago the writer listened to an old saddle-bags preacher who had spent his early life in preaching the gospel in the backwoods of America. On one occasion he sent a scout to announce throughout a district that he would hold Divine service in various farmhouses. At the time he was expected

in one of these he did not arrive when announced, and great fear sat on the people assembled lest he should not come. Long years had passed since the settlement had been formed, and not a religious service had been held during that time. It was a painful suspense, and the mistress of the house, unable to endure it, went out and travelled some miles through the bush in search of the minister. He had lost his way, but she came upon his track, and saw the prints of the horse's feet in the muddy road. In the rapture of her soul she knelt in the way and kissed the footprints, thanking God that His messenger had come. The biographies of missionaries teem with beautiful incidents of a like nature.

It is a truly blessed work to publish the gospel of peace. But it should be done promptly, gladly, and with a surging enthusiasm. God does not use forced service. No taskmaster stands over the Christian soldier to goad him into action. There is no flogging in Christ's army, save the self-reproach which an unfaithful recruit inflicts on himself. It is a service of love, and love makes the willing feet in swift obedience move. Therefore the soldier girded with truth and mailed in righteousness, has his "feet shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace."

V

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

"Withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one."—EPH. vi. 16.

"But above all lay hold,
On Faith's victorious shield;
Armed with that adamant and gold,
Be sure to win the field!

If faith surround your heart,
Satan shall be subdued;
Repelled his every fiery dart,
And quenched with Jesus' blood."

C. WESLEY.

THE soldier has donned his panoply of mail. He is arrayed with his girdle, breastplate, and sandals. But one piece of armour was imperative in the ancient warfare that the attacks made by the enemy might be effectually repelled. There are

moments of weakness or faintness which come to the bravest soldier when a dart from the foe may pierce some unguarded place. There may be an opening, however small, which may admit the arrow finely tipped and rancorous with poison. The vizor may not always be kept so closed but that a dart, skilfully thrown, may find an entrance. Therefore a shield was absolutely necessary to make the warrior invulnerable. So the apostle gives the instruction: "Withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one."

This signifies that the shield is indispensable. If faith as a shield is not provided and worn, the only infallible defence of the Christian is wanting. He is helpless to defend or preserve the truth, righteousness, peace, or any Divine treasure with which he has been endowed. Paul speaks of "the fiery darts of the evil one." He refers to the arrows so largely used in old warfare. These were made of a slender shaft of wood or reed, measuring from twenty-two to thirty-four inches long. They were tipped with metal or flint sharply pointed, and winged with feathers. They were sometimes poisoned, to which reference is made by Job: "The

arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof my spirit drinketh up" (Job vi. 4). Often they were dipped in combustibles, as spoken of by the Psalmists: "He hath prepared for him the instruments of death, he maketh his arrows fiery shafts" (Psa. vii. 12). "Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper" (Psa. cxx. 4). These missiles were sent long distances with great swiftness and strength by men trained to be perfect adepts, some of them shooting the mark even with the left hand. Some of the most warlike nations paid such attention to the training of archers that they became renowned through the world for their skill. In more modern times English bowmen performed prodigies of execution in the field, and won many famous victories. An expert archer had a keen eye to discern any opening for his dart, and was alert to his opportunity. In a moment the arrow flew to its mark, and the deadly wound was made.

The evil one whom Paul speaks of is the most skilful of archers. He knows every weak place in human nature. He knows every available spot where an arrow can enter between the greaves of the armour; he knows exactly when to shoot. His darts or arrows are all fiery. They rankle and

burn like fire in the soul, or they slowly and quietly soothe it into the slumber of death by the narcotic poison with which it has been soaked. He has different darts for every individual, and he never makes a mistake in their destination. He has an intimate knowledge of every one he selects as his prey, and time, occasion, and kind of arrow are chosen with infallible skill so that the attack may be effectual. His quiver is always full, and his passion for prey is never slaked. Therefore the caution of the apostle is sorely needed.

No one is exempted from the fiery darts of the evil one. Not Christ Himself was left without being tried by temptation on every side of His nature, so anxious was Satan to prevail against Him. It must not be supposed that because He came out of the ordeal unscathed that there was no struggle or pain in the encounter. The trial took place when our Lord was worn down by physical weakness and mental strain. It must not be forgotten that on the human side of His nature Christ was susceptible of every human passion and emotion. He fulfilled all righteousness by subduing passion and guarding every emotion, but temptation was a test of His virtue and a trial of His spiritual strength, as it is of every man. In this experience He

is our pattern and leader. He carried the shield of faith and therewith came off more than conqueror.

The darts of Satan are prepared with the utmost cunning and subtlety, adapted with unerring skill in each particular case so that they may work the utmost ill. There is the dart of pride, which arouses self-love and flatters self-will. It appeals to desire for position in society, to craving for wealth, to ambition for fame, and suggests unlawful methods to gain these ends, as was the case with Christ when on the pinnacle of the temple. There is the dart of envy, leading to jealousy in every department of life, especially in certain professions, causing rivalry in business and bitterness among friends, resulting frequently in fraud, extravagance, and ruin. There is the dart of evil passion, which arouses every degrading desire of human nature, and is the cause of disease, misery, premature death, and infinite sorrow. There is the dart of unbelief, which leads men to doubt and uncertainty as to the existence of God, the truth of Christ, the immortality of man, and, finally, as to any difference between right and wrong. No dart is more fiery than this, causing distraction of mind, morbid introspection, remorseful forebodings,

and dreary regrets. Herbert Spencer was the most highly gifted metaphysician of the last generation and the great high priest of agnosticism. He warred against religious creeds all his life, but at the last he felt his position to be unsafe. His last utterance was significant: "Religious creeds I have come to regard with a sympathy based on a community of need, feeling that dissent from them results from inability to accept the solutions offered, joined with the wish that solutions could be found." Pity that a life, so richly endowed and with such boundless opportunities, should end in disappointment.

Many other darts are directed by the enemy against men. None are exempt: all classes and all ages are subject to attack by the great arch-foe, and none are more severely tried than the most saintly and devoted followers of Christ, who, as possessing more graces and virtues than others, draw towards themselves the rankest hatred of the enemy of mankind. Therefore the best as well as the worst of men need protection and require "the shield of faith that they may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one."

The importance of shields in ancient warfare is evidenced by the varieties of form, substance, and ornamentation in which they

still exist. The Egyptians seem to have been the earliest to make and use them. They were first made of wicker-work, or a wooden frame, covered with bull's hide, having the hair outwards, with rims of metal and metal studs. They were oblong, circular at the top and square at the bottom. Inside was a thong, by which they were suspended from the shoulders, and a handle by which they were grasped. The Assyrians had shields both oblong and circular, made sometimes of silver and gold, but oftener of wicker covered with hides, and held by a handle fixed to the centre. The round ones were highly ornamented. Some of them covered the whole person and had a curved point at the top, being intended to defend the head from missiles hurled from a castle wall during a siege. The Hebrews had shields of various sizes and material. For common soldiers they were of wood covered with hides. Brazen shields were used by officers and generals, but golden ones by princes. These often decorated the walls of palaces, as David's shields were suspended in the temple. The Roman shield with which Paul was familiar was oval in form and adapted to the form of the body. This it is which he names in the precept of this chapter. Shields were

both for defence and attack. They covered the body from the foe, but they also enabled the soldier to make his assault with comparative safety. The Christian soldier needs a shield all-covering—as he is engaged in a war in which there is no discharge, he has to defend himself from the unceasing darts of the evil one, and he is ever to be attacking the strongholds of sin.

This shield is faith—in the realm of ordinary life a principle which holds the world together and makes family, social, and commercial life possible, but which, in the region of the supernatural, unites God and man in fellowship, as the man lovingly and confidently grapples himself to God in Christ, rests on His promises and trusts Him for mercy, power, and grace to the end of life. This was the faith of the apostle who writes this letter. He was a man who exercised an enormous influence in life, and who has been an incalculable force for good all down the Christian centuries. The secret of his influence in life and in history was the perfect faith he had in Christ from the moment he was smitten to the ground as he rode to Damascus, and looked into the resurrection brightness of Jesus, saying, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" From that

moment self died, and Christ was all and in all. He trusted in Him with the simplicity of a little child, receiving from Him knowledge and wisdom, following every whisper and indication of His will, undertaking with the enthusiasm of a surging love the most gigantic tasks, and bearing with a joyful heart, scourgings, imprisonments, afflictions, and bitter disappointments, until at last he bravely faced a martyr's death. He called himself the "bond-slave" of Christ, but he was the "Lord's freeman," because the service was one of love—passionate, overflowing love. Faith was an unbroken link between him and Christ, and through that there flowed into his soul the unfailing supply of grace for every time of need. Faith is not always understood in its simplicity. It is not a work to be done, but the act of receiving a gift from the hand of the Saviour. It is trusting the word of Christ without reasoning or hesitating. When Christ says, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out," it is for the sinner to come, as the publican came, or as the robber on the cross came, and forthwith to believe that Christ receives and saves him. A man in an inquiry-room was anxiously desiring to be saved from sin, and friends were around him exhorting him *to*

believe. He was deadly in earnest, but no light or peace came to his mind. The writer, passing by at the moment, was arrested by the man turning to him and saying, "Sir, they are all telling me to believe; will you tell me what I am to believe?" I said, "Have you come to Christ to be saved?" He replied, "I have, as well as I could." "Then," I replied, "you have only to believe with all your soul that Christ does save you now." In a moment he grasped the truth and realised peace. Faith in such a case is only taking the gift from the hand of Christ which He holds out and offers freely to the sinner. But that one act of faith leads to a life of faith. It becomes the law and condition of life. It has proved itself in ten thousand instances to be the inspiring, fortifying, elevating principle which has made men heroes, reformers, and evangelists of the noblest order. The Christian lives by faith. Whatever he needs he draws from Christ by faith. Thus Jesus is made to him "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Faith is the root grace of the Christian life; all other graces spring from it. It bears fruit in good works; as the initial grace it leads to others of highest quality: "In your faith supply virtue, and in your

virtue knowledge, and in your knowledge temperance, and in your temperance patience, and in your patience godliness, and in your godliness, love of the brethren, and in your love of the brethren, love." So, as from a rich and fruitful stem, there unfold themselves from faith the qualities of a glorious character and career. They are the best and strongest men who exercise the most perfect faith, and by a law of interaction faith operates to give ever-increasing development to all the finer elements of human nature. So Abraham fulfilled tests of his faith, of increasing severity, until he stands in the dim light of early history as a sublime exemplar of implicit, unhesitating obedience to the Divine command, known as the father of the faithful and the friend of God. Moses was unquestionably the noblest man and the greatest statesman of the old world. But if he had not had faith he would have been only in the rank of Remeses or Cheops, with a pyramid to hold his bones. But by faith he chose the side of the oppressed and became the greatest nation builder and political economist of ancient times, with a nation to bewail him and God to bury him when he died. Moses did all by faith. By it he made his choice when young, became his people's liberator,

established on true foundations a religious system which was saturated with the principles of eternal righteousness, and left behind him an everlasting name. Nothing could have made Moses all he became but faith. His profound trust led to perfect obedience; his constant obedience gave him growing experience of God in His essential tenderness, and experience made him unfold all the potentialities of a nature which was many-sided and many-gifted beyond any on record. No man had greater inducements to swerve from the right, and none had sorer trials to carry in his long administration of government, but no man ever obliterated self more entirely—no man ever set God before him with greater fixedness of purpose. Therefore God honoured him as none other was, taking him into the holy mount and for forty days showing him Divine types, revealing to him the art of Divine government, and filling him with wisdom for his unique experience. If faith ever had an entire exemplification, it was in Moses, of whom it was said, "He was faithful in all God's house."

The history of faith would be the story of Christianity from Abel to Christ and from Christ to the present day. In one of the campaigns of Napoleon a great officer met

with death, but every morning when the roll-call of the regiment was read, his name was called with the rest, and a comrade answered for him, "Dead upon the field." The talisman of a great name was thus preserved to inspire the future bravery of his men. So the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews made to pass in grand panorama the names of the mighty dead who in preceding ages had lived the life of faith. Patriarchs, prophets, kings, martyrs, and poets, were recalled and filed before the eye of the ancient Church. Myriads of millions have since then had their blood stirred with generous feeling as the roll has been read. So also might there be a longer roll presented, in which would appear the names of the apostles; of witnesses like Ignatius and Polycarp; teachers like Athanasius and Augustine; missionaries like Columba or Boniface; reformers like Wyclif or Huss, Luther or Calvin; martyrs like Hooper, Latimer, or Ridley; evangelists like Wesley or Whitefield; patriots like Cromwell or Milton, and statesmen like Wilberforce or Gladstone. These men, like Paul, had crossed the capital letter "I" from their lives and said, "I live, and yet *no longer I*, but Christ liveth in me; and that life I now live in the flesh,

I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 21).

This faith when exercised becomes the habitual and normal condition of a Christian life. By it the soldier is kept watchful, humble, brave, inventive, adventurous, and persevering. On the other hand, it nourishes the soul in truth and purity. It is fashionable to-day to speak of cult and culture. There is no culture like that of faith, none so enriching to the whole man; it brings strength in weakness, hope in despair, and refuge in extremity. To the soldier it is protection full and complete. When the dart of pride is hurled, the shield of faith intercepts it, and the soldier cries, "But far be it from me to glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me and I unto the world." When the arrow of envy flies, faith stops its course, and then he cries, "In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another, in honour preferring one another." When the dart of ambition is aimed, faith lifts the soul above it, crying, "Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth." When the fiery dart of passion springs from the bow,

faith intervenes and says, "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." When deadly doubt attacks the believer, faith warns him, saying, "Having then a great High Priest who hath passed through the heavens, let us hold fast our confession." Thus faith saves in every emergency; it is an open port in time of strain; it is a key which opens the darkest dungeon and brings victory in every hardset fight.

"Withal take up the shield of faith." It is absolutely indispensable, and therefore Paul with almost passionate emphasis insists upon every soldier being armed with it.

Take it, because it is a defence for the whole man. Through it the will is resolute, the head is clear, the heart is sound, the desire is pure, the conscience is good, and the affections are heavenly. Christ is a perfect man in heaven, and what He is there, He wills us to be by faith in His name.

A shield, though heavy, must be used with ease and quickness. This comes by constant use and practice. Nothing grows with practice like faith. By use, its exercise becomes easy, and the power required to exercise it is given from heaven as required.

The shield repulsed the arrows of the

enemy. The shield of faith quenches even darts flaming with fire or rancorous with poison. The word of the Lord is ever sure: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain."

The shield of faith confers peace. A sense of security gives confidence, and this brings peace. The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.

Then cometh victory, for "this is the victory which hath overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God."

VI

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

"Take the helmet of salvation."—EPH. vi. 17.
"Putting on for a helmet the hope of salvation."—1 THES. v. 8.

"Helmet of the hope of rest!
Helmet of salvation!
Nobly has thy towering crest,
Pointed to this exaltation.
Yet I will not thee resume,
Helmet of the nodding plume;
Where I go no foeman frighteth,
Sword or other weapon smiteth;
All content I lay thee down,
I shall gird my brows with an immortal crown."

GEORGE WILSON.

A VISION of overpowering magnificence appeared to the greatest prophet of the Jewish Church, as he bewailed the flood of iniquity which had swept in upon the people of Israel, causing their exile and captivity in

a heathen land. He was not cast down in despair by the apostasy of Judah, but lifting up his voice sang of the readiness of the Lord to hear the cry of penitence, and to stretch forth an arm of strength for their deliverance. Then a vivid, lonely figure arose on his enraptured sight. It was that of a hero-warrior, entering upon a struggle for the deliverance of the people from their sin and shame. "And he saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore his own arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness it upheld him. And he put on righteousness for a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke" (Isa. lix. 16, 17). This was not mere poetry, it was history anticipated, and it was all realised in the life and death of the Lord Jesus, who, having obtained eternal redemption for us, went up on high, having spoiled principalities and powers of darkness. The picture drawn by the prophet of the warrior-king of righteousness is the model of the Christian warrior. The armour worn by the General must be donned by every recruit, and the zeal which enwrapt him must enthuse and inspire every one who takes the

field. Therefore, Paul, in exhorting the army of Christ in its first sallies upon the world, directs the soldier to take "the helmet of salvation," or, as he enlarges the idea in another place, to put on "for an helmet the hope of salvation."

Salvation is the crowning gift of Divine love. It is an all inclusive and comprehensive blessing. We are in danger of minimising the meaning of it if we do not rise to a conception of all that God has accomplished for us by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. All that marvellous range of blessing which is involved in His incarnation, earthly life, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. We are too apt to think and speak of the forgiveness of our sins as being salvation. So it is in a limited sense, or rather it is the first beginning of a succession of deliverances and mercies, which are continued until victory is obtained over all the powers of evil, and eternal glory has been realised by the believer. It is the mighty power of God made known in perfect and transcendent love, which lifts the condemned sinner out of sin, shame, and misery, and never stays in its beneficent purpose until he is exalted with Christ at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. All

the infinite outpouring of Divine grace, of which this fulness of joy is the outcome, must be conceived of as salvation in its proper sense. We lose in every way by taking low or narrow views of redemption and the glorious purposes which Christ had in its achievement. It did not only concern the personal deliverance of the sinner, but the transformation of the social condition of humanity, the bringing in of national righteousness to all peoples, and the filling of the whole earth with the Divine glory. The hope of salvation is the one bright element in the future of humanity. It alone opens a prospect of purity or happiness either for the individual or the community. Before the coming of the Christ, hope had died out from the world. Or if it lived, there was only the faintest trace of a lingering existence which was perpetuated among the Jews by some antiquated songs and prophecies which were read in their gatherings, but which were little understood. All the learned and professional classes had lost the faculty of entering into their inward meaning, and they mumbled to the people about a vulgar Messiah, who would fight battles and win victories with bloodstained hands like those of King David. The literature of the world

at the beginning of the Christian era was written in the minor key and was full of the pessimism of despair. There is not a note of gladness even in the treatises of Cicero on "Friendship" or "Old Age." The poets and philosophers of the empire of Rome knew nothing of a millennium of truth and gladness. They wrote bitter satires or scorching denunciations of prevalent shameful vices, or they indulged in horrible obscenities, or in funeral dirges of the absence of virtue. But there is no strain of hope, no song of gladness, no faith in a Deliverer, and no hope of a mighty Saviour. Then there comes a change. A man, cast out by his own nation, pursued with frantic hatred by his kindred, leading a life of suffering and privation, begins a new strain of writing. He sends out treatises on the greatest problems of human life and condition, written so that the poorest may understand. They ring with a joy to which the world is strange; they are bright with the hope which springs out of a soaring optimism. They tell of redemption, of freedom, of clean lives, of loss retrieved, of guilt atoned for, a personal Saviour for every man, and of nations of holiness and peace built upon a sanctified and beautiful individualism. Then this man's comrades unite

with him in swelling the song of hope. Paul is joined by Peter, James, John, Matthew, Mark, Luke and others, who swell the chorus until the ancient world rings with the music; a new era is inaugurated, and everywhere men and communities are seen arising out of the death of sin into a state of holiness and happiness. This is the result of the hope of salvation, and the salvation of which hope is the dominant strain. From that time to the present, history tells of a rising tide of progress in liberty and morality. But most observable is the hopefulness discernible in every manifestation of public life. An entire contrast is presented to the days of old when the world had no Christ, no bright prospect, no promise for the future, no lustrous vision of a New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God. Then the world was the city of dreadful night, where bats flew aimlessly and owls hooted in monotones of sadness. It is impossible for us to realise the experiences of men, who, like the apostles, had a unique commission :—

"To ring out the old, and to ring in the new;"

And to—

"Ring out the false, ring in the true;"

but it was a mission worthy of a God, and

the joy of the God-man was their joy. Their hearts were rapturous with the experience of a great salvation from the power of sin, and were burning with holy consecration to the service of Christ who had loved them and given Himself for them. Their superb faith begat in them a hope that was aflame with anticipations of the noblest kind. Their own experience led them to seek to communicate the gospel of love to all the world, and they travelled to the confines of the known world to scatter the unsearchable riches of Christ among the lost and degraded. So the old order passed, giving place to new ideas, and opening out the vista of a kingdom universal in its sway, and only beneficent in its influence. The hope of the apostles saved the world. They rescued it from absolute despair and infused into it a new youth with eager longings and glowing promise. They were able to do this because every convert they won to the gospel of Christ was filled with the spirit of hope, and like themselves preached a great salvation to others. Thus the flame kindled at Pentecost spread outwards until there was a glorious Christendom in place of an imperial despotism of sensualism and blood.

The apostle aptly spoke of the hope of

salvation as a helmet. This is armour for the protection of the head. The soldier must take care of his head. It is the crown of his physical organisation. It is the organ of his intelligence and of all his higher faculties. It is the seat of the noblest senses—sight, hearing, smell, and taste all find their power of perception in it. It is the fountain of nervous influence and strength. It concentrates within itself the most wondrous operations of the human frame, and is also the medium by which man's spiritual and intellectual nature finds due expression. It is the chief ornament of the human frame. It only can give proper exhibition of the emotions, affections, and passions of the mind. It does this by the eye, the ear, the mouth, by the pose of the head, and in many other modes. As the heart needed to be guarded by a breastplate, so equally important was it in old days to protect the head with a helmet. An arrow would as easily slay a man by piercing his brain as his heart, if it were left exposed to the foe. Therefore the helmet was worn as an absolute necessity in ancient warfare. It had many forms and was made of many materials, but they all meant safety for the head. The earliest form, used by the Assyrians, was a cap of iron, terminating

above in a point, and sometimes furnished with flaps covered with metal scales, protecting the ears and the back of the head, and falling over the shoulders. Later, the curved crest, the tassel, or plume were added to give additional grace and elegance to the appearance. The Greek and Roman helmets were made of brass, steel, or bronze, decorated with precious metals, and surmounted with a strong crest beautifully wrought. In later warfare the plume of feathers or silken threads was worn to give the cap a stately appearance, and also to give prominence to the figure of the officer in command. Thus by degrees it became not only a protection but an ornament to the head. It gave dignity to the carriage of the soldier; it was often an incitement to him to carry himself with greater erectness and majesty, and his appearance was calculated to strike a measure of awe into the souls of the enemy. All this has its application to the subject now under consideration.

The head is the organ by which the man understands the message and nature of salvation. All knowledge comes to him by the head. It thinks for him, judges and decides for him, speaks and argues for him, and, indeed, gives expression to all the knowledge and feeling of the mind. It is by the head to

a large degree that a man is judged. The glance of the eye, the curve of the lip, the erect or drooping carriage of the head, all indicate the inwardness of the man. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the many functions the head performs for him, or the large extent to which it is the man. It is the chamber of the brain by which all that elevates man above the brute enters into him; and it is the quick and subtle medium of sensation to every fibre of the body. It is equally the means of communication of one part of the body with the other, and of the body and mind with each other. A man is twice a man who carries his head aloft in free and easy fashion, avoiding the downward cast, or the hang-dog look. The orator adds greatly to the effect of his address who does not shamble in his attitude or tug at the lappels of his coat, but who faces his audience by looking them in the face with a graceful poise of the head; and the commander who rides before his men with his helmet erect and the white plume waving, fires the hearts of his regiment far more than if he rode with a downcast air or sneaking carriage.

The Christian soldier is to carry himself like a hero. He has no need to apologise for

his existence, or to speak with whispering humbleness. Therefore he puts on for an helmet "the hope of salvation," and stands with boldness before the foe, prepared to hold the fort, or take the field, or storm the stronghold, valiant for the truth, and dauntless against a thousand odds. Many of the sublimest episodes in history have been those when, inspired with "the hope of salvation," the Christian has stood firm and strong, surrounded by furious enemies, but has fearlessly witnessed a good confession and cast confusion on his foes. The magnificent bearing of Paul before the Governor Felix or King Agrippa, or, better still, before the Emperor Nero; or of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, before the Pro-consul, Galerius Maximus; or of Martin Luther before the princes and bishops of the empire at Worms; or of Wyclif before Archbishop Courtenay and the council of clerics at Blackfriars; or of John Knox before Queen Mary Stuart, with numberless others as brave and majestic in their attitude as these, attest how gloriously a man may be raised above his old dead, degraded self, when he is animated by "the hope of salvation." Nor is the bearing of the men helmeted with this hope, less inspiring when they have been engaged in a fiery onset

upon the enemy, and have turned armies of aliens to serve the living God. It stirs the enthusiasm of humanity when we see a man like Boniface leaving his home, refusing ecclesiastical honours, and travelling into the wilds of Germany to win the people for Christ. It was an epochal day in mediæval history when he cut down the huge oak of Thor under which the people had their bloody worship. They watched him in tumult and terror, expecting that the thunders of heaven would burst upon his head. But out of the tree thus demolished he built a church to the true God, and baptized one hundred thousand souls in the name of the Triune God. Nor less wonderful was the bold and daring mission of Raymond Lulli, an accomplished scholastic and alchemist, but who gave up philosophy and science to devote himself to the conversion of the Mohammedans to Christianity. He crossed the sea, proclaimed Christ in the streets of Moslem cities, argued with the learned, spoke the message of salvation to the poor; though often repulsed, he returned again and yet again to the work, until after long and trying years of labour he gained a crown of martyrdom when fourscore years of age.

If a modern instance may be permitted,

there are few finer things in history than the bold and manly onslaughts made by George Whitefield on the wickedness and irreligion of the masses of his countrymen during more than a generation. His audiences sometimes numbered tens of thousands, who were often frantic with rage as he denounced their transgressions, and then were melted into penitence as he pleaded with them to come to a Saviour. The bull-dog courage which enables a man to stand unmoved before the cannon's mouth is an insignificant feeling compared with the grandeur of fortitude and the perfect self-sacrifice of such a life. He had the courage of a host of men, and the zeal of a seraph from before the throne.

The helmet worn by such men is of Divine metal and of perfect workmanship. It was tried in the furnace, as silver is tried, seven times. It was produced by the Master Himself through the testing experiences of the manger, the workshop, the wilderness, the justice-rooms of Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod, the agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary, and the darkness of the grave. Nothing cost so much in the universe, nothing was so severely tested, and nothing has been so gloriously successful, in the salvation and restoration of men, in the defeat of the enemies of order

and truth, and in the fulfilment of the purposes of Divine love. The assurance of the believer that he is a partaker of the Divine nature, gives him supreme confidence in His God, and therefore the hope of final victory and eternal glory, "is an anchor to the soul, both sure and stedfast, and entering into that which is within the veil; whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us."

Therefore this helmet is strong, impenetrable, and invaluable. It is provided for every Christian, and it gives lofty bearing, unfailing courage, and final triumph to all who wear it in devotion and loyalty to the King. It lifts the believer above fear, despondency, disappointment, and persecution; it enables him to slay every foe in his path, it brings trophies of conquest from every battlefield, and at last, with blushing honours, the warrior is summoned to receive his reward of unfading joy.

VII

THE CHRISTIAN'S MATCHLESS SWORD

"Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."—Eph. vi. 17.

"Most wondrous book! Bright candle of the Lord;
Star of Eternity! The only star
By which the bark of man can navigate
The sea of life and gain the coast of bliss
Securely; only star which rose on time,
And on its dark and troubled billows, still
As generation, drifting swiftly by,
Succeeded generation, threw a ray
Of heaven's own light, and to the hills of God,—
The everlasting hills,—pointed the sinner's eye."

R. Pollock.

THE Christian soldier is now fully arrayed in the armour of light. He has put on his panoply from head to foot,

and has his shield upon his arm. But he must have a weapon of defence and attack. The profession of the soldier is aggressive, and this is especially so with the Christian. He is in an enemy's country, and he must fight to live, he must fight to conquer. He must be armed with a weapon with which he can both defend himself and attack the foe. Therefore Paul says, "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

No weapon has done more terrible service in warfare than the sword. In the old times it was the soldier's principal weapon, and practically his only effective one. The darts, arrows, javelins, and spears which were used then were merely supplemental to the sword. Therefore in old history those slain in battle were said to have been "killed by the sword." Some swords still preserved retain a marvellous interest, and impart an extraordinary inspiration. To handle the long powerful sword of William Wallace, the patriot of Scotland, or of Gustavus Adolphus, the hero of the Protestant faith, or of George Washington, the soldier of freedom, is to feel a thrill of sympathetic enthusiasm with a noble cause. But all swords are insignificant in merit or fame compared with the Sword of the Spirit, of which may be said, what David

said of the sword of Goliath, "there is none like it."

The sword is a very ancient weapon, going back to the stone period. They were first made of flint, the stones being shaped and sharpened so as to be very effective. The next manufactured were of bronze, the blades being from fifteen to eighteen inches long. The Egyptians improved on these by making swords of iron with blades thirty inches long, which were far more effective than any before them. After these came those of steel, the most perfect being made of Damask steel, which were famous for long ages for their wonderful flexibility and sharpness of edge. Formidable weapons some swords were. There were two-edged ones, the points being turned outwards so that if they pierced a man he was almost torn to pieces before it could be drawn out of him. There were some made strong and heavy, so as to hurt a man as much by their weight as by their sharpness, and others were of exceeding fineness, but which did deadly execution by inflicting wounds which bled inwardly. But all these were not to be named with the Christian's sword, of which we read, "For the Word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged

sword, and piercing even to the dividing of the soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." But there is a vital difference, which makes the Sword of the Spirit a complete contrast to any other, in that it only destroys sin and evil in the soul of man, and in doing this it saves the man alive. The sword of man is an instrument of human slaughter, and its history is one of bloodshed and sorrow. It is through the work to be accomplished by the Sword of the Spirit that peace is to be universally diffused and the offensive weapon sheathed for ever.

The Sword of the Spirit is a well-tempered sword. In its progress from the iron ore to its perfect form and keenness, the sword goes through more processes of puddling, smelting, refining, and tempering than can be described here. But when the sword blade emerges in its crude form from the furnace it is so brittle that a fall on the ground would destroy it. It is then heated to a white heat and plunged into cold water which possesses strong astringent qualities. This draws the fibre of the weapon close, but the metal is still brittle. To obviate this the tempering process is practised. This is to pass the

blade through the flame of a hot fire until it assumes a peculiar hue, only known by experts. Andrea Ferrara used to perform this operation in the dark, and it was through his accidentally running a blade through the body of a workman, who had concealed himself to discover the secret, that he fled from Italy and settled in Scotland. After being tempered the sword is tested by being fixed in a machine and struck violently against wood and iron, on edge, sides, and back. So severe is this trial that sometimes forty per cent. fail to stand the test.

No sword was ever so carefully prepared as the Sword of the Spirit. None has ever gone through such purging tests as it has done from the severe criticism of the learned, the aciduous lampoons of the satirist, the heavy artillery of the sceptic, and the gay wit of the trifler. But all these have only more fully displayed the perfectness of the metal and the fineness of its edge. The corroborations of Scripture, which have been discovered by researches into the tombs, temples, and pyramids of Egypt, the ruins of Nineveh, Babylon, Chaldea, and Assyria, with the wonderful findings of the Palestine Exploration Committee, not overlooking the manuscripts of the Bible, and other invaluable

treasure, such as the Didache, or Teaching of the Apostles, and the Diatessaron or Harmony of the Four Gospels, compiled by Tatian, the disciple of Justin Martyr, with other rare and helpful relics of the past, are invaluable. These modern discoveries have spiked the guns of innumerable objectors to the truth of the Sacred Record, and to-day, after a tremendous fire of criticism, it is more than ever the book of the race, and the hope of the world. At the same time the doctrine, teaching, and precepts of the Bible are becoming more fully understood and appreciated. Time vindicates their excellence, and displays their incomparable qualities more unmistakably as they unfold themselves in personal or social or national practice. No microscopic eye has found a flaw in the moral teaching of the Bible. No one who ever trusted to its guidance has left it on record that it led him astray, but history is crowded with testimonies to its value, and millions have died with its promises on their lips as the passport to eternal glory. Scripture is a sword that never fails the soldier who trusts in it. "The Word of the Lord cannot be broken."

The Sword of the Spirit is a sharp sword. A blunt, jagged sword that will not cut nor

pierce with ease when wisely handled is useless in time of strain. A true sword will cut through joints and sinews at a stroke. Therefore, blades of Damascus, of Toledo, or of Sheffield are famous throughout the world for their swift cutting power. When Anne Boleyn stood on the scaffold in the Tower, she clasped her hands round her throat and said to the executioner, "Headsman, I have a very little neck; you must not strike more than once." "No, madam," he replied, "I will not strike more than once." Then there was the flash of a sword in the air, the beautiful head rolled on the scaffold, and a lady of the Court rushed forward and covered it with a handkerchief—so clean will a right blade divide and do execution. Sir Walter Scott has vividly related how Saladin, the Emperor of the East, showed to Richard Cœur de Lion the fine edge of his Damascus blade, by snatching from the shoulders of an attendant a gauze shawl, and, throwing it into the air, cutting it into pieces as it floated to the ground. But these examples are poor compared to the sharpness of the Sword of the Spirit. This, as we are told, is "living and active, . . . piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, . . . and quick to discern the thoughts and

intents of the heart." How keen and swift it is in these respects a simple instance may show. The case was related to the writer by one who knew the circumstances and can vouch for their correctness. Some years since a tradesman in a Lancashire town was sitting in his store waiting for business, but none seemed likely to come. Not being well, he resolved to close the shop and walk into the country to inhale the healthy breezes of the surrounding hills. He walked to the outskirts of the town, and coming to a bridge which spanned a river, he paused and stood leaning on the wall to survey the prospect. As he stood, suddenly an impulse seized him, and, without pausing to consider what he was doing, he lifted up his voice and cried, "Prepare to meet thy God!" Then, astonished at himself, and feeling somewhat ashamed, he turned his steps homewards. In a few moments he heard footsteps running behind him, and a gentleman came alongside and said, "Sir, why did you call out those words?" He replied, "I do not know; a sudden impulse came over me, and I did it without any reason whatever." Then the gentleman said, "This is the finger of God. I was at that moment under the bridge, about to drown myself. I have

been overwhelmed with trouble and sorrow of late until life had become unbearable, and I was about to end all by plunging into the water when your voice arrested me." It is interesting to know that he found comfort in the grace of Christ, rather than by rushing into eternity by a cowardly suicide. This is how the Sword of the Spirit is "quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." It cuts through the stoutest walls of prejudice, ignorance, and sin, bringing conviction and repentance to the soul, and it then leads to faith in Christ, through whom new strength and comfort are imparted.

The power of the Sword of the Spirit is miraculous. It conquered three thousand souls in the name of Christ on the Day of Pentecost, and victories have been won by it wherever it has been used ever since. Its power was displayed in a marvellous manner in the Reformation, when Martin Luther took it as his only weapon, and proclaimed with such effect the doctrine of Justification by Faith in Christ only. Europe was divided into two great camps, and the soldiers of Christ fought against those of the Papacy with the result that England, Scotland, Germany, Holland and Sweden threw off

for ever the tyranny of Rome and rose into a nobler existence of truth and freedom.

The Christian soldier must be expert in the use of the sword. Therefore he must train himself to familiarity with it. This can only be done by constant practice. Jesus Christ was absolutely perfect in its use. As a child he had committed to memory the books of the Law, as was the fashion with Jewish boys in pious households, and probably also the whole of the Psalter. His mother had a spirit responsive to Divine things, and she would supplement at home the teachings of the Levites and the Synagogues. Therefore when He was with Satan in the desert, on the pinnacle of the temple, and on the mountain-top, being plied with skilfully-prepared temptations to evil by the great arch-enemy, He repulsed him at every turn by a thrust from the Sword of the Spirit. He turned to his repertory of Old Testament truths and assailed the tempter therewith. Satan was helpless before these and left the field utterly baffled. All the armour a soldier can wear will not avail without the Sword of the Spirit. A great and pressing need of this day is careful, systematic study of the Bible. By many Christians it is worse read than any other book.

Other books are read consecutively so that an intelligent idea of their contents can be retained. But the Bible is often kept on the dressing-table in the bedroom, and while the morning toilet is being hurriedly performed, it is thrown open hap-hazard and a verse or two read. Then it is closed for the day. It is doubtful whether some Christians have read a book of the Bible through in an intelligent manner. It is distressing to observe in Bible Classes or Christian Endeavours, when the portion to be read is to be sought in the minor prophets, how confused some people are as to where abouts it is to be found. In our day schools children are taught to recite in chronological order the kings and queens of England. But it is far more important that Christians should know where to turn for any book in the Bible. This is a minor matter, but it is an indication of the extent of the knowledge of the Bible possessed by some.

It is very important that Bible readers should have a clear idea of the progressive steps of Divine Revelation, but most important of all is it that there should be an intimate and thorough knowledge of the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus. Following this there should be a clear idea of the es-

tablishment of Christianity as set forth in the Acts of the Apostles. There should be obtained also an understanding of the scope and argument of each Epistle. The whole Bible is not so large as Macaulay's "History of England," or Carlyle's "Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell," and yet there are many who have never carefully read the Book from beginning to end, which alone makes known the mysteries of religion and the way of salvation. To such the appeal is addressed now in the most solemn manner possible, to begin a thorough study of the Word of God so as to be prepared both to repel every attack of the enemy and also to destroy the strongholds of sin by "the sword that goeth forth out of the mouth."

In a systematic reading of the Bible a good-sized copy with clear type should be used. The reader should not be afraid to underline passages, or to make marks of emphasis on the margins, where he meets with verses of special interest or importance. The Revised Version should be habitually used. It is so immeasurably the superior instrument, and brings us so much nearer to the mind of the Spirit that it is worse than a mistake to cling to the Authorised Version because of old associations. The British and

Foreign Bible Society is now issuing excellent cheap editions of the Revised Version, so that there is no excuse for not adopting it. This is not a case where an earnest Christian will feel he can please himself, or follow his own preference. The only question the lover of God's Word will find it necessary to consider will be, which is the most perfect instrument of God's will, or which brings us nearer to the mind of God? Although the Authorised Version is endeared to us by tender reminiscences and splendid service, it should not blind us to the superior claims of the later translation. If the two versions can be used side by side and compared with each other, much additional light will be gained by the student. It must be remembered that when the Authorised Version was prepared not one of the three oldest copies of the Bible were at the disposal of the translators, and an enormous amount of material of invaluable character has also been made available by discoveries of MSS. of the most important nature. The old translators did their work quite as well as the modern ones considering their materials, but to prefer their work to that of our newer Biblicists is to prefer the modes of transit of two hundred years ago, to the railways and

electric cars of the present times. The references of the new version are much more correct also than those in the old, and the notes in the margin supply variant readings which are of great assistance in a right understanding of the text.

To Christian workers and teachers a good Concordance is essential and should be always at hand. If it can be obtained, Dr. R. Young's "Analytical Concordance" is the best that can be used. It is a mine of valuable information, especially as to its careful examination of the terms used in our translations of the Bible. In the Authorised Version there are often from four to ten words in the original languages, all rendered into English by the use of one word. But Dr. Young gives the exact meaning to be attached to such words in every separate case. If this book is unobtainable then smaller and cheaper Concordances may be had which will render great service. A Concordance to the Revised Version is more than due, and if one could be prepared and issued with the Oxford and Cambridge "Helps," a handy supply of the needs of ordinary readers would have been found.

A Bible Dictionary should be within easy reach of the Bible reader. It may be

impossible that the invaluable dictionary just completed under the editorship of Dr. Hastings can come into the hands of many of the rank and file of our Bible readers, but a copy should be provided for use in every Free Library, also in every Sunday School Institute, in every Young Men's Christian Association, and in the libraries of our large and well-provided Sunday Schools. Frequent use could thereby be made of its stores of up-to-date knowledge on all Bible subjects. How necessary provision of this kind is will be seen when it is considered that the future of Christianity depends more on an intelligent knowledge and appreciation of the Bible than anything else. The Christianity of the future must be thorough and well-digested if it is to fulfil its mission in the world. The people of the coming generation must not only be taught to believe, but the grounds of their belief. There is no danger to our faith so great, as for people to grow up holding a mere formal, hereditary belief in a code of doctrines or articles, without understanding on what foundations they rest. Helps such as the foregoing will make the Bible many-fold more interesting and instructive, than when it is read cursorily and without reflection. As opportunity occurs these suggested

helps may be supplemented by attentively reading books on the lands of the Bible, Oriental manners and customs, lives of Christ and Paul, with other Biblical leaders. The use of a Commentary also is important. For the ordinary reader the brief Commentaries on the Books of Scripture in the Cambridge Series will be found helpful, but where the purse and opportunity allow, many of the volumes in the "Expositor Bible" will be of untold value to the student.

It rarely happens that a systematic and thorough Bible reader falls either into scepticism or worldliness. The Word of God, whether for defence or attack, is equally efficacious and all-sufficient. If the Bible is mastered, it will be found that for every fiery dart of the evil one there is a Divine specific in the form of a promise, or precept, or a massive truth, which repulses the dart, and renders it harmless. In aggressive warfare, the facts, principles, and sentiments of Gospel truth have only to be proclaimed, and the strongest refuges of sin and error will fall to the ground. If these can be preached and taught with the aid of eloquence and learning, so much the better, but no one will be ineffectual or unsuccessful if he is an expert in the knowledge of the Bible. Dwight Moody was

a man of one book. His sermons, appeals, illustrations, and expositions were drawn almost exclusively from the Bible, and he was so expert and practised in the use of the Sword of the Spirit, that he became the most wise soul-winner of modern times. To all believers in Christ Jesus, but most of all to those who aim to do effective work in the great battlefield of life on the side of truth and right, these words come, enforced by the example and precept of one who was a past master in the art of using it: "Take the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

VIII

THE CHRISTIAN'S VITAL BREATH

"With all prayer and supplication, praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints and on my behalf."—EPH. vi. 18.

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day:
For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round world is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

TENNYSON.

ARMOUR of the best material and most perfect completeness is of no service if the soldier cannot breathe freely. He must be able to inhale and assimilate the ozone which is around him, and he must exhale the gases or elements which his nature repudiates as

unsuitable for him. What breath is to the body, prayer is to the Christian, and no one needs to exercise prayer more unceasingly than he who has put on the armour of light. Prayer is not part of the armour. Paul here drops the use of metaphor, and makes a direct and simple appeal. Prayer is required by the soldier both in defence and attack. In either case it is imperative that he seek strength and grace from God.

We often talk and write of the power of prayer. In a literal sense it cannot be said to have power because man has none. Whatever power man had in the days of his innocence he had from God, and not in himself. But by sin and transgression he lost the possession of it. Therefore when the believer is "created in Christ Jesus for good works," he claims power wherewith to perform them by prayer. The command to pray presupposes man's entire dependence upon God. Therefore as a suppliant man approaches the Divine throne directly that he may be prepared to overcome all evil and every foe. At the throne God and man meet face to face. There is no intercepting veil nor intervening presence. It is true that we can only come to God through Christ, but He is Divine, the second person in the adorable Trinity;

therefore He is to be worshipped in praise and prayer. Secondary laws by which God is supposed to govern the material universe have no place in the spiritual region. As to the laws of the material realm, prayer is to a large extent needless. Those laws close round us continually, and by the knowledge we have of their environment we are able to order and regulate our outward lives accordingly. God does not do for us what we can do for ourselves. Therefore these laws work on ceaselessly and harmoniously from age to age, and the balance of the universe is perfectly maintained. Divine direction may be sought and found as to how to use them in a perfect way, because the more they are obeyed the more man's physical condition is improved. But it is totally different in the higher region of the spirit. There God operates not through secondary means as laws and forces, but directly in His Infinite and Eternal Personality. We deal in prayer, with a Personal Will, not with blind necessity, nor an insensate grind of law. We are in touch with a Father of Light and Love. Man cannot worship an abstraction called the Absolute or the Infinite, or the Unfathomable. We do not pray to a metaphysical idea, but we worship the Father, and we

behold the Father in Jesus Christ. The blessed relationship between God and the believer, as Father and child, in itself conveys the idea of dependence, and this the Christian habitually recognises. In a sense all men do, or if they do not intelligently recognise, they instinctively feel their dependence and act accordingly. Man in his savage state would not pray to a stone image or an animal, or to the sun if there was not an intuition impelling him to do so. Therefore without knowing why, or being able to analyse his motive, he obeys the instinct within him and worships as best he knows how. But the Christian knows—he has been Divinely taught; he acknowledges with thankfulness his dependence upon a Father of boundless beneficence, and therefore prays in the fullest and most real sense of the word.

Because he is always dependent the Christian soldier must "pray without ceasing." The Lord Jesus said:—"Men ought always to pray and not to faint." Therefore, although the spirit of prayer never varies, its conditions, forms, expressions and occasions are endlessly various, but no matter how differing, true prayer fits itself exactly to each time, place and occasion, and sends the cry which obtains the blessing.

The exhortation given by Paul says: "Praying in every season and watching." The words literally carry the sense of even dispensing with sleep to pray. The Christian soldier must pray night and day with vigilant and untiring care. "I sleep," says the bride in the Canticles, "but my heart waketh." This is the teaching of Christ—the Christian must not be taken unawares, even at midnight.

The groundwork of all kinds of prayer must be private and secret prayer. The Saviour was most emphatic on this point. It is by this the taste for prayer is obtained and the spirit of prayer cultivated. The command of Christ is: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Amidst the hurry and bustle of life it is of the utmost importance to have private and confidential fellowship with God in prayer. That this may be done effectually convenient times should be set apart and kept sacredly for the purpose. No life should be so busy but that a season should be reserved for God alone. And if there should be times when the soul seems indisposed to enter the

privacy and close the door, then it should be done all the more, because then is the time of danger, and to neglect is to invite the enemy to enter in. By faithfully keeping the sacred tryst an intense longing for it will insensibly take possession of the mind—it will be the brightest hour of each day, and will give a glow of holy experience to all its hours. Not only this, but regularity and punctuality as to the set time and place will train the mind to continuous devotion. If there is no such quiet intercourse with God there will come in time to be an entire neglect of prayer. Stated secret prayer puts the soul into the right posture for the day, and we shall be helped to preserve the heavenly direction as we go through the daily round and the common task. It is through such retirement with God that the greatest victories over self are won and the largest blessings drawn from the Divine treasure-house.

The Christian soldier in every case possible should have an altar in the house, round which the household should be gathered, certainly once, but, if possible, twice, a day. It is a starved household that never bows itself in worship before the throne. Family prayer binds parents, children, and servants

together with a bond of sympathy that nothing else can produce and will enable each to exercise restraint of temper and a tenderness of feeling which will produce many happy results, and which in the long run will have a powerful influence in the home. Mathew Henry has said that those who have prayer in the family daily do well; those who have reading of the Scriptures and prayer do better; but to have singing, reading, and prayer is best of all. In our busy modern life the first may not be convenient save on the Sabbath, but to close the day of rest with holy song is a delightful exercise and privilege. There is a special effort now being made to revive and extend the practice of family worship. If the readers of this little book will adopt the habit in their own homes, and also where they can exercise influence in this direction, they will sweeten lives and give higher impulses to them far beyond their conception. In the case of children in a household nothing tends more to hold them to right ideas and virtuous ways than to be gathered round the family altar and earnestly commended to God. Even in the lives of prodigals such seasons have exercised a restraining power in times of temptation and have risen up in the

memory with such vividness as to lead them to repentance and salvation.

The practice of Social Prayer should be cultivated by the Christian soldier. In the prayer-meeting of the church or of the Sunday-school, or in the Christian Endeavour Society, there is an opportunity afforded to offer vocal prayer, which should by no means be neglected. There are many thousands of Christian men and women to-day who would be thankful if they could break silence and offer a brief prayer in the hearing of a friend or a small company. Many such have been asked by a dying child or neighbour to offer a prayer by the bedside and have been dumb because they have never ventured to break silence in sending a petition to the mercy-seat. It will be sure to come in the life of every Christian that a brief prayer offered by the side of a sufferer or a prodigal will be of untold value, and it will be a real sorrow not to be able to do so. But the young people of this day have opportunities of learning the habit by practising in social meetings, which, if made wise use of, will prepare for much holy service in life. Not that prayer is to be offered thus to attain facility of speech, but because it is a duty which every Christian should seek to fulfil, and in fulfilling it there

will result the power to do much good. In such exercises the petitions should be brief and direct. Long prayers should be offered in secret, but not in public. Some of the greatest religious leaders have habitually spent long hours in private agonising in prayer before God, but long prayers in public are not Scriptural. The prayer-meeting has expired in thousands of churches through the dulness and deadness occasioned by long prayers. If young disciples will be content to present a few petitions in few words it will be a Divine education to themselves, a refreshment to all present in the assembly, and it will make the prayer-meeting the most popular gathering of the church.

The Christian soldier will find it a helpful spiritual accomplishment if he can attain to the habit of what our Puritan forefathers called Ejaculatory Prayer. Times will come in every one's experience when it is imperative to call upon God and there is no possibility of seeking privacy. Then, even when business presses, or when recreations are being indulged in and the mind is apt to be drawn away from the line of right and duty, happy is that person who can, in the midst of excitement or worry, send a cry to heaven for relief and succour. Nehemiah,

the cupbearer in the Persian court, was in attendance on Artaxerxes, the great king. It was a crime punishable with death for a courtier to stand in the royal presence with a heavy countenance, and Nehemiah was sad and showed it. The king demanded the meaning of such an offence. The sword seemed already drawn for his execution and he was in great trouble. But as quickly as an archer sends the arrow whizzing through the air when the bird rises on the wing so did Nehemiah act. "So," he says, "I prayed unto the God and heaven." It was but the interval of a moment, but in that instant the prayer reached the heart of the Almighty and the answer of blessing came. The king granted his wish and a nation was immeasurably profited thereby. The cry shot from the soul like an arrow from the bow, is heard as really as though a day had been spent in long petitions. To obtain the full advantage of ejaculatory prayer requires much practice, but the archer has to exercise himself until he can hit a hair at a long distance. So the blessing which comes to the man who is thus expert in sending in a moment the cry for relief is worth much care and seeking. To follow this habit is to fulfil the direction, "Pray without ceasing," because the more a

man prays the more he desires to pray, until he lives in its atmosphere and its exercise.

The most Divine form of prayer and that which links us closest to Christ is Intercessory Prayer. This is the privilege of the Christian alone. "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." A man must first have earnestly cried, "Lord, save me!" before he can cry, "Save my child," or "my neighbour." He must have secured an interest in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus before he can plead for grace and mercy for others. But when he has passed from death unto life and can rejoice in sins forgiven he can take the whole world into his arms of love and cry for the salvation of every man. The duty of interceding for others is too much neglected by the Church. It is remarkable that nearly every exhortation to prayer to be found in the Epistles means intercessory prayer. Paul practised it always—"I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" (Eph. i. 16). "I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, in every supplication of mine, on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy" (Phil. i. 3). He exhorted the Christians to the same duty. "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications,

prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men" (1 Tim. ii. 1). "Continue stedfastly in prayer, watching thereunto with thanksgiving; withal praying for us also." Many other words did the apostles speak of like kind, impressing this sacred duty upon the Churches.

How well pleasing to God is the performance of this privilege is shown in the vision seen by John in Patmos, when heaven was opened before him and he saw in the hands of the glorious cherubim, "golden bowls full of odours, which are the prayers of saints." Thus from the world of saved humanity there ascend the intercessions of longing hearts for the consummation of the purposes of redemption, and they are as fragrant incense in the holy of holies. No such prayers are lost, and no one can estimate how much they prevail to preserve the world from the righteous judgments of God.

It is impossible not to recall at this point how passionately the Saviour poured out His soul in intercession for His people on the night of His agony. In the supper chamber He prayed with His disciples as none other ever prayed on earth. That prayer was intercession from beginning to end. In it the Christ gathered up the intensest fervour

of His soul, and gave unparalleled expression to His love for His followers. That outpouring of infinite sympathy and sacrifice was the crown of prayer on earth, and it was the beginning of that ministry of intercession which He ever liveth to pursue for us at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. The prayer of Christ in the supper chamber, because it is the noblest and loftiest ever recorded, should be to all Christians their model and exemplar.

In all prayer the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit should be sought and obtained. "For we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Holy Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26). Thus man's ignorance and incapacity is compensated for by the grace of Christ. While He, who is Son of God and Son of Man, pleads in our behalf before the throne, the Holy Spirit pleads within us revealing our darkness, sin, and insufficiency, even to ask for a blessing aright, and enabling us to ask in faith nothing wavering, but out of an urgent need and an agonising desire laying hold upon the strength of God and claiming His promise. This grace and help of the Spirit is an imperative necessity in prevailing prayer.

"The prayers I make will then be sweet indeed,
If Thou the Spirit give by which I pray :
My unassisted heart is barren clay,
That, of its native self can nothing feed :
Of good and pious works Thou art the seed,
That quickens only where Thou sayest it may ;
Unless Thou show to us Thine own true way,
No man can find it ; Father, Thou must lead.
Do Thou then breathe those thoughts into my mind
By which such virtue may in me be bred
That in Thy holy footsteps I may tread ;
The fetters of my tongue do Thou unbind,
That I may have the power to sing of Thee,
And sound Thy praises everlastingly."

WORDSWORTH.

IX

THE WARRIOR'S CROWN

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."—Rom. viii. 37.

"What bliss to roam those heavenly fields among,
And hear of Abraham's faith from Abraham's tongue,
Converse with him whose voice delayed the sun,
Learn wisdom from the lips of Solomon,
Mark rapt Isaiah's look of holy fire,
Or list to melodies from David's lyre,
And him of Patmos view, to whom 'twas given
On earth to lift the veils of hell and heaven!
Him shall we meet who here was poor and blind,
Yet sovereign of the vast domain of mind,
Illustrious Milton! or with Bunyan quaint
Trace the long journey of some humble saint."

W. C. Dix.

THE Christian soldier stands fully equipped. He has put on the whole armour of God and he is arrayed, "as a king prepared for the battle." He is also enthused

with the spirit of prayer whereby his faith and valour may be maintained to the end. As to the battle no more can be said here, except that it will be severe, varied, continuous, and strenuous in its conditions. But for the encouragement of the warrior a brief view may be taken of the final result of the struggle as described by a master pen. Paul who has given us our instructions was a model soldier and a victorious leader. When he was still sustaining the fight after long and bitter experience, he wrote words of lofty stimulus to the rank and file in the army of truth assuring them of victory and a glorious reward, so that they might fight with the inspiration of triumph in their souls.

"In all these things," he wrote, "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." "These things" were the most deadly weapons that could be forged by the enemy to secure the utter destruction of the Christian. They were Tribulation, Anguish, Persecution, Famine, Nakedness, Peril, and Sword. They may be called the seven great plagues of the Christian life, and the seven fiery tests of his courage. If these can be boldly faced and overcome there is nothing of which the weakest believer need be afraid. Paul had faced them all—he had endured a

severe fight of afflictions in passing the ordeal, but out of them all—even from out of the mouth of the lion, the Lord had delivered him, and he was rejoicing in salvation.

The first named of these deadly foes is *Tribulation.* It is a severe experience which strains the nerves, tests the faith, gives rise to questionings, murmurings, and doubts as to the Divine love and wisdom. The word is derived from the Latin "*tribulum,*" which was the threshing instrument or roller whereby the Roman husbandman separated the corn from the husks; and "*tribulatio*" sets forth this act of separation. The apostle uses it to set forth a higher truth. The sorrows and troubles of the early Christians were tribulations or threshings by which what was pure and imperfect was cast out from their natures, leaving nothing but what was sterling and valuable. Although the result was gracious, the process was ofttimes terrible. This is the necessary discipline in a Divine education. The Christian is permitted to pass through the trial that he may be blameless and faultless. This is effected by the transmuting power of Divine love; the discipline becomes a triumph, and the groan of agony becomes a song of rapturous joy. So Paul himself testifies: "Let us rejoice in

our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience probation, and probation hope, and hope putteth not to shame because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us" (Rom. v. 3–4). This shout of praise has been re-echoed by multitudes of meek and pious sufferers throughout the ages.

Anguish. The Christian soldier endures both bodily and mental anguish. The Lord Jesus suffered anguish in every part of His body, head, hands, side, and feet. But in His soul far more acutely; from the ingratitude of those whom He came to save, from the cowardice of His followers, the malicious opposition of the classes, and the dense ignorance of the masses. The Christian is not above his Lord, and anguish comes to try him in a hundred ways. To inflict agony upon believers in Christ has taxed the wicked ingenuity of men for nineteen centuries. Some museums are hideous with their accumulations of instruments of cruelty by which holy men and women have been tortured, not accepting deliverance. There may be seen the rack, the thumbscrews, the pillory, the stocks, the scavenger's daughter, the scaffold, and many another shameful machine

by which man has sought to wreak his hatred upon his fellow-man. In the gloomy Castle of Chillon the contrivance is shown by which heretics were swung up to the ceiling, and a pan of coals placed on the floor beneath them, so that they might be slowly roasted. The inventions used in the inquisitions were too sickening and diabolical to be even hinted at. The imagination of the inhuman priests who contrived and used them must have been set on fire of hell, so abominable were they. The lurid paintings of the tortures of hell drawn by Dante and Bunyan are mild when compared with the actual agonies inflicted upon saintly sufferers by those who so awfully travestied the name of Jesus whilst professing to honour it.

But anguish, however excruciating, could not destroy the faith and hope of the Christian, as it did not affect the purpose of the Lord Jesus. John Huss sang his own death pæan as the flames rose round him, and the Malagasy martyrs, as they were flung from the hill of hurling into the abyss below, were heard to sing hymns of praise as they were falling through the air. In bitter agonies the struggle of thousands of meek and saintly souls who have wrestled with the powers of evil have been fought and won.

Persecution. This began almost with the birth of the race. Cain was the first persecutor, and Abel was the first victim. In the long interval between that time and the birth of Christ it raged with undying fury against the upholders of God's kingdom upon earth. At the coming of the Christ its passion for blood seemed to revive, and even in His infancy Jesus had to become a fugitive from His own land. When He became a religious teacher and reformer the intensest bitterness of the human heart raged against Him until it accomplished its crowning crime by putting Him to a shameful death on Calvary. The hatred of man towards Him was not slaked even then, but towards His apostles and followers the bitterness became more unscrupulous and manifold. The apostles were hunted from land to land. The catalogue of their sufferings and trials is a prolonged tale of horror. Ten tremendous outbursts of persecution broke out against the Christians during the reigns of the later Roman emperors, in which it is impossible to calculate the immense numbers who were slain by the sword, burnt in the fire, or torn to pieces by infuriated lions, tigers, and wild bulls in the amphitheatre, to make a Roman holiday.

These were followed by the hunting down of noble Christian missionaries and converts in every part of Europe, as they called heathen tribes from their bloody rites and sacrifices at the shrines of Woden and Thor They were followed in course of time by the fiery baptisms of horror which fell in France, Italy, Switzerland, and elsewhere upon those who cherished the Bible and sought to maintain their faith in purity against the corruptions of Popery. When the Reformation—that greatest moral cataclysm of history—broke the power of the Papacy, persecution still pursued its direful way, and through the reigns of the Tudors and Stuarts, Protestants were imprisoned, exiled, and executed without mercy for their adherence to principle and conscience. To this day the same cruel rôle is being played wherever priestism or tyranny dare to assert their true nature and spirit.

But the sufferings and deaths of noble martyrs have only tended to magnify the grace of Christ and to adorn their doctrine with heavenly beauty. Christianity has never shone with more Divine lustre than when the fires of Smithfield, Oxford, Gloucester, or Tower Hill, illuminated the faces of John Rogers, Lady Anne Askew, Nicholas Ridley,

Hugh Latimer, John Hooper, or Lord Cobham. The heroic spirit of the Gospel was never displayed more grandly than in the immoveable stedfastness in the pillory, or the prison, of Dr. John Leighton, William Prynne, Daniel De Foe, Oliver Heywood, or Philip Henry. Persecution has been the furnace which has refined the gold of the believer seven times.

Famine. Few things are harder to bear with patience than poverty or want. Hunger and thirst strain the powers of endurance in human nature to their utmost tension. If they do not inflict the torture of the rack or the fire, they are more wearing and trying than these. Many have succumbed before the wearying, gnawing tooth of hunger who might have smiled at the martyr's fire. Paul passed through this experience. He and others endured famine and want. Innumerable witnesses for Christ have been left to perish—the early Christians who fled to the Catacombs, the hunted Bible-readers of Waldensian and Albigensian valleys, the noble Covenanters of Scotland, and many of the two thousand expelled ministers of 1662 had to pass through this trying ordeal; but the records and traditions of the stedfast faith of these brave soldiers of the cross are the

priceless legacy of the Christian Church. No privation could daunt their spirit, or bring them into submission to the foe. They passed the fiery test triumphantly, and still rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Nakedness. This is the deprivation of home, refuge, and friends. Being cast an orphan upon the world, being destitute, forsaken, tormented. But even then faith spreads her golden wings, casts itself buoyantly upon the Providence of God, and finds in Him abounding comfort and succour.

A fellow-student of the writer, a man of remarkable capability but of uncertain judgment, after being a short time in the Christian ministry, became unsettled in his religious convictions. He had given himself to the study of such books as "Essays and Reviews," "Colenso on the Hexateuch," Herbert Spencer's "First Principles," and Bain on the "Senses and Emotions," with the result that he resigned his ministry. He took refuge for a short time in Unitarianism, and then slowly drifted into blank materialism. He even professed to doubt whether there was any distinction between right and wrong. The influence of his early

faith, especially the recollections of a pious mother, kept him severely conscientious in his conduct and his relations with others. He had many ups and downs in life, but at length became a superintendent on a line of rails which was being laid down towards the far west of the United States. One day being in the primeval forest, and with nothing pressing on hand, he wandered into the shady depths of the woods, lost in meditation. After wandering a few hours he found he had missed the track and knew not where to turn. He stopped and considered for a little while. Then he saw in the far distance a small settlement, with a frame cottage, and the smoke proceeding from its chimney. He hastened to it to obtain some refreshment and to inquire his way. On reaching the little home he saw a negro woman of the darkest hue and the most primitive type, with three children playing on the floor of the cottage. The woman provided him with some buckwheat cakes and milk, which to his keen appetite were sweeter luxuries than the rarest delicacies of an alderman's table. It was only a few years after Abraham Lincoln had given liberty to the slaves of the Union, and he said to the woman: "Well, I suppose you have been in slavery?"

She looked at him attentively and wiped away some tears. Then she said: "Yes, saar, I was sold upon de block. My massa out dere in de field was sold on de block away from me, then this picanniny was sold away from me, and then this other one, dey was all sold, and I was put up de last of all. De gemmen in de room came round to examine me and then de bidding went on. O, saar, my heart was breaking, dey was all sold from me, and de gemmen were going to separate me from them all. Then I cried, 'Gemmen, you may buy dis poor body, but you cannot buy my soul, de Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed dat, and it is free.'" The poor lapsed sceptic was struck to the heart and said within himself: "God have mercy on me, here is a poor slave woman happy even when being sold upon the block, and I am miserable." From that time he fought his doubts, he struggled his way through mists and darkness back to God and Christ, until in time he entered the ministry once more and lived to preach the Gospel for many years. So is it ever. When suffering the loss of all things the believer knows that in God he has a portion unfailing and secure.

Peril. Here again Paul gives a leaf out of

his own experience. When was he not in peril? From the moment of his conversion he stood in jeopardy every hour. He was in danger at first from the suspicions of his fellow-apostles; then from the burning hatred of his quondam friends, the Jews, who bound themselves by an oath never to eat or drink until they had accomplished his death. The young lad who overheard the wicked compact was acting better than he knew when he went and told the captain of the guard of the plot against the prisoner. From dangers by sea and land, from kings and governors, from the cruel monster Nero—indeed, from every quarter Paul was threatened with dangers and deaths. He carried his life in his hand everywhere, but "always rejoicing." He sang praises as he sat in the stocks, he was happy when his back was ploughed by the horrible lash; he wrote his most jubilant letters in prison; he was a bright, free spirit in the storm at sea when all others were in despair. He had learned "in whatsoever state he was therewith to be content," and he was sealed with the superscription, "The Lord knoweth them that are His." So it has ever been. When Augustine and his monks came to seek the conversion of England and faced the opposition of our Saxon forefathers, or when

early missionaries went to the uttermost parts of the earth to scatter the glad tidings of the Gospel, or in modern times when Robert Morrison had to live in Canton disguised as a mandarin and hidden in a godown, but laying the foundations of Christianity in China with patient wisdom and skill; or when John Williams had to face the furious anger of the South Sea Islanders; or when Bishop Hannington perished through the ignorant rage of the blacks of Uganda. Perils have no power to intimidate the true soldier of Christ. John Gibson Paton has been surrounded by the savage cannibals of the New Hebrides that they might club him to death. But the brave man has cast his arms round the bravo with his club uplifted, and, holding him in firm grasp, has pleaded with him concerning the love of God in Christ until the poor barbarian has been won to the Gospel. The life of the Christian soldier is one of unceasing peril. He must take toils and risks as part of his covenant, entered into when he enlisted. Therefore his faith stands secure against the world, and having done all he stands.

Sword. The sword of the enemy has ever been as ready as that of the keen blade of the Christian. Had Paul, when he wrote

these words, a prescient gleam of the sharp weapon by which in after days he would have to die? He doubtless knew that there would be the probability of such a fate for him. And when it came he was ready to be offered. He could say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord shall give me at that day." After the second trial of this incomparable soldier of the cross, he was cast into the lowest dungeon of the Mamertine prison. He was seventy years of age, worn down with anxiety and ill-health, but the inward man was buoyant and strong as ever. On June 29, 64 A.D., if tradition may be trusted, he is summoned to his execution. He is in his filthy underground apartment, and the brutal soldiery draw him out by ropes into the upper room. He is withered and bent in body by his strenuous life, but his white hair is a crown of glory to him, and his face is radiant with hope. He has to travel three miles to the place of execution, a long journey for him at such an age and after such treatment. Soldiers of the guard form and place him in the centre; the Christians from the churches have gathered and fall into line to

go with him. Luke is there, true to the last. One hopes that Timothy had got there also. The signal to march is given, and the procession moves on. It arrives at the place, Aquæ Salviæ, along the Via Ostia. Then with calm dignity he bids his friends farewell. He also would assuredly bless his executioners. Then all is ready, his head is laid on the block, the sound of weeping is heard, the flash of a sword is seen in the sunlight, and in a moment the brightest, freest, bravest soul on earth is a saint in heaven with a martyr's crown. So the sword has been the key to unlock the door of heaven to many a saintly warrior, of whom the time would fail us to tell.

"None of these things move me," said Paul. "These things" have been the common experience, but the Christian overcomes them all.

He not only conquers, but he is "more than a conqueror." Some victories verge closely on defeats. After Wellington's crowning victory of Waterloo, as he rode over the awfully gory field, he wept and said, "There is nothing so awful as a victory unless it be a defeat." The recent victory won by England has brought with it so much debt, such frightful loss of life, and

such internal discord as makes it questionable whether it has been worth the cost. It has been so with all modern wars. But the Christian, having waged a good warfare, rejoices, because he leaves no track of blood, no cry of distress, no wasted country behind him. He is glad because souls have been saved, tears have been dried, homes have been brightened, and heaven has been opened to admit many to share its glory. The heroes of a war like this put to shame the warriors of earth like Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, or Napoleon.

Therefore the soldier of the cross is "more than conqueror." His victories have a beneficent glory, and confer blessings so unspeakably delightful upon both the conqueror and the conquered that no single word can rightly describe the achievement. So Paul, who was a master of phrases, invented this one to express what could not be put into a single word, and it has become familiar as a household word amongst the followers of Christ.

The Christian soldier is "more than a conqueror," because he is not subject to alternate successes and losses. The earthly warrior wins and loses, while the spectators keenly watch the fortunes of the fray, and lay their money on the one side or the other

as the chances change. But the heavenly warrior wins all along the line, and gathers his spoils from every field. The early Christians were often cast down, but were never in despair. From every earthly standpoint they ought to have been in despair. Arrayed against them were all the power and resources of the Cæsars, with their hosts of corrupt priesthoods, sanguinary armies, unprincipled governors, and brutalised masses. But they were never in despair. In many contests they seemed to lose, but, like Antæus, they received new power and inspiration as they touched their mother earth and sent up their cry to the God of heaven.

Therefore in a few generations they destroyed the vast empire of corruption and iniquity. It was a miracle of prowess, of daring and adventurous struggle, that would accept no defeat, nor was intimidated by tremendous odds, nor knew any loss, until the mightiest empire that ever earth knew fell before the Cross of Calvary.

They were "more than conquerors," because they not only defeated and disarmed their adversaries, but turned them to the service of Christ, and infected them with their own enthusiasm. Paul himself is a marvellous instance of this Divine trans-

ference. His bigotry, malice, rage, against the followers of Jesus were intense, up to the point of his conversion. From that time he surpassed all the apostles in his flaming zeal for Christ, his readiness to suffer for truth's sake, his large catholicity of soul, and his abundant labours. What a loss that transforming change was to the cause of evil, and what a gain to humanity cannot be told, but it was the most marvellous event in its results in Christian history.

Similar startling and signal victories of Christianity crowd the pages of the Church's history. It is sufficient to refer to the almost miraculous manner in which the colliers of Kingwood, the slum outcasts of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and the riotous masses of Moorfields, were turned by Wesley and Whitefield into meek and earnest Christians, who in turn laboured much in the Gospel; or how similar miracles of grace were accomplished by John Hunt and James Calvert among the cannibal savages of Fiji; by Jones and Griffith in Madagascar; by John Eliot and David Brainerd among the Red Indians of America; by William Carey and Alexander Duff in India; by Hans Egede in Greenland; by Charles Gutzlaff and William C. Burns in China; by Robert Moffat and Barnaby

Shaw in Africa; by Henry Martyn in Persia; with many more, by whom armies of aliens have been turned from gross idolatries and shameful sensualities into being fervent and tireless soldiers of the Lord Jesus. Such conquests are not known in ordinary warfare. If a country or province is subdued after much struggle and loss of life, the bitterness abides in the hearts of the defeated people for generations. The Emperor William, by the skill of Moltke, conquered the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, but to this day the people in their hearts are loyal to France, and long for a day to dawn when they shall be united to it once more. But those who subdue men to Christ can rejoice that the souls brought into subjection to Jesus become at once animated by ardent love to Him and loyal devotion to His sway.

"More than conquerors," because the gains of the warfare are not like earthly treasure which becomes depreciated in beauty and value as time passes away; these develop and unfold themselves in growing beauty and value unceasingly and for ever. It is the case of one talent becoming ten talents; of the soldier who is faithful in very little, becoming ruler over ten cities. The enthu-

siastic impulsiveness of youth grows into the clear white light of an all-consuming zeal for the Captain of our salvation; the raw recruit gains the experience of a veteran, and in the end is full of years and full of honours. Few earthly conquerors are preserved in esteem after their comet-like glare has spent itself. Many are remembered with horror for their ferocity and injustice. Some even in their lifetime are relegated to obscurity. Not so with the soldier of the Cross, as he fights the good fight of faith—all the treasures of Divine grace are poured upon him; love, wisdom, courage, power are bestowed upon him increasingly until he is called to higher service, and he passes into the presence of the King to receive a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

"Then they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they who turn many to righteousness as the stars, for ever and ever."

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